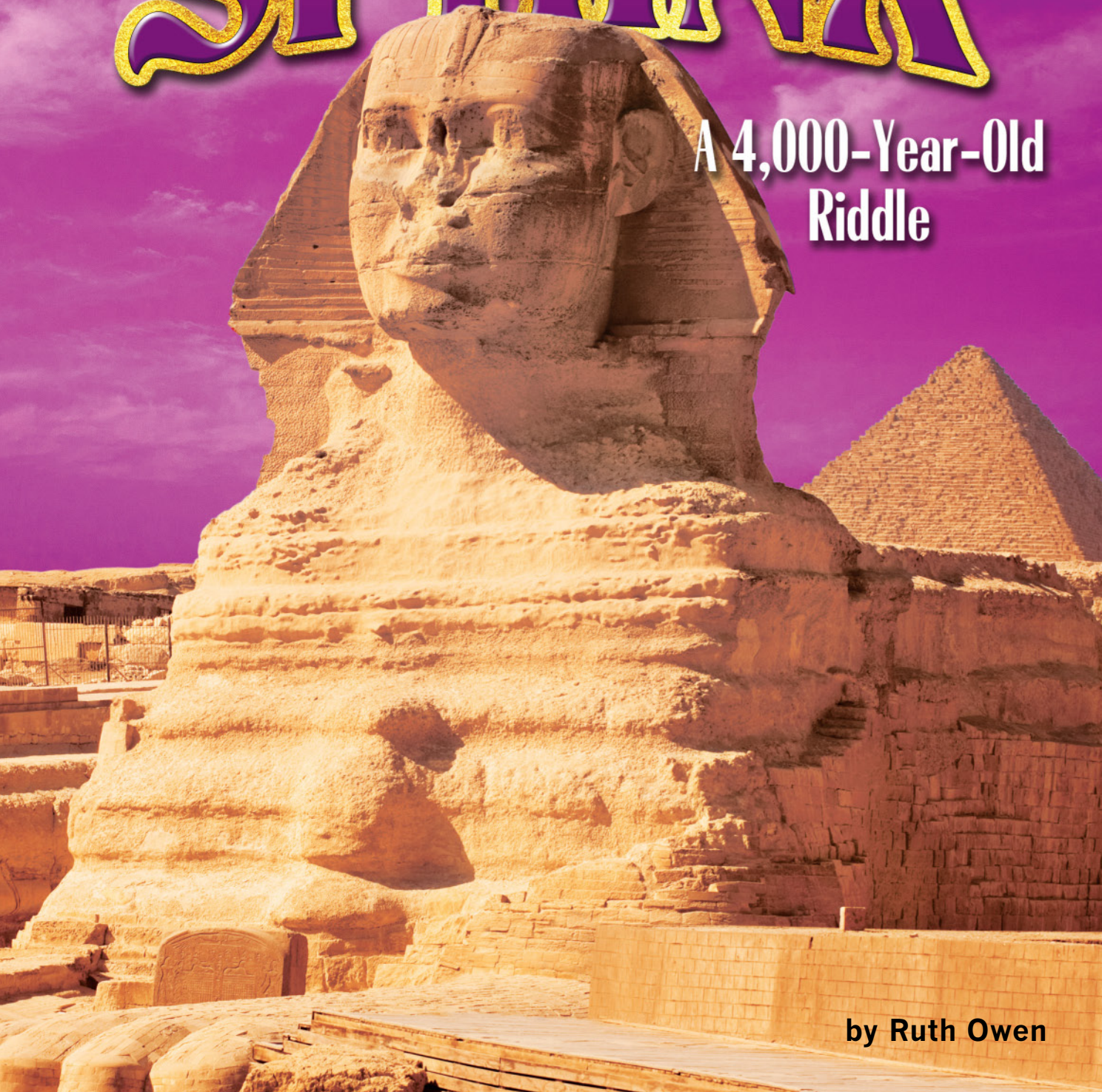




THE

SPHINX

A 4,000-Year-Old
Riddle



by Ruth Owen

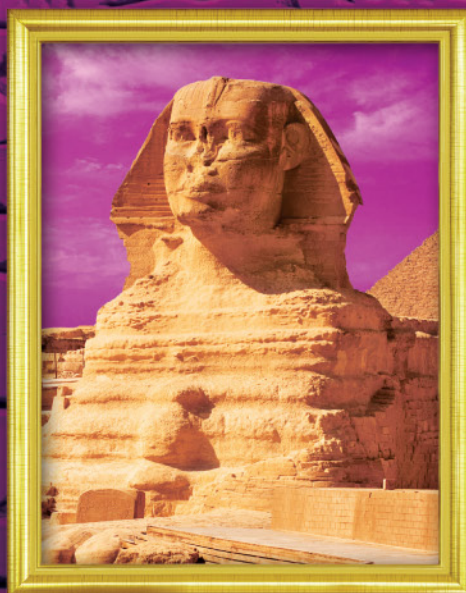
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THE

SPHINX

A 4,000-Year-Old Riddle



by Ruth Owen

Consultant: Dr. Angela McDonald

Subject Specialist and University Teacher—Archaeology, Classics, and Egyptology
Centre for Open Studies, University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK

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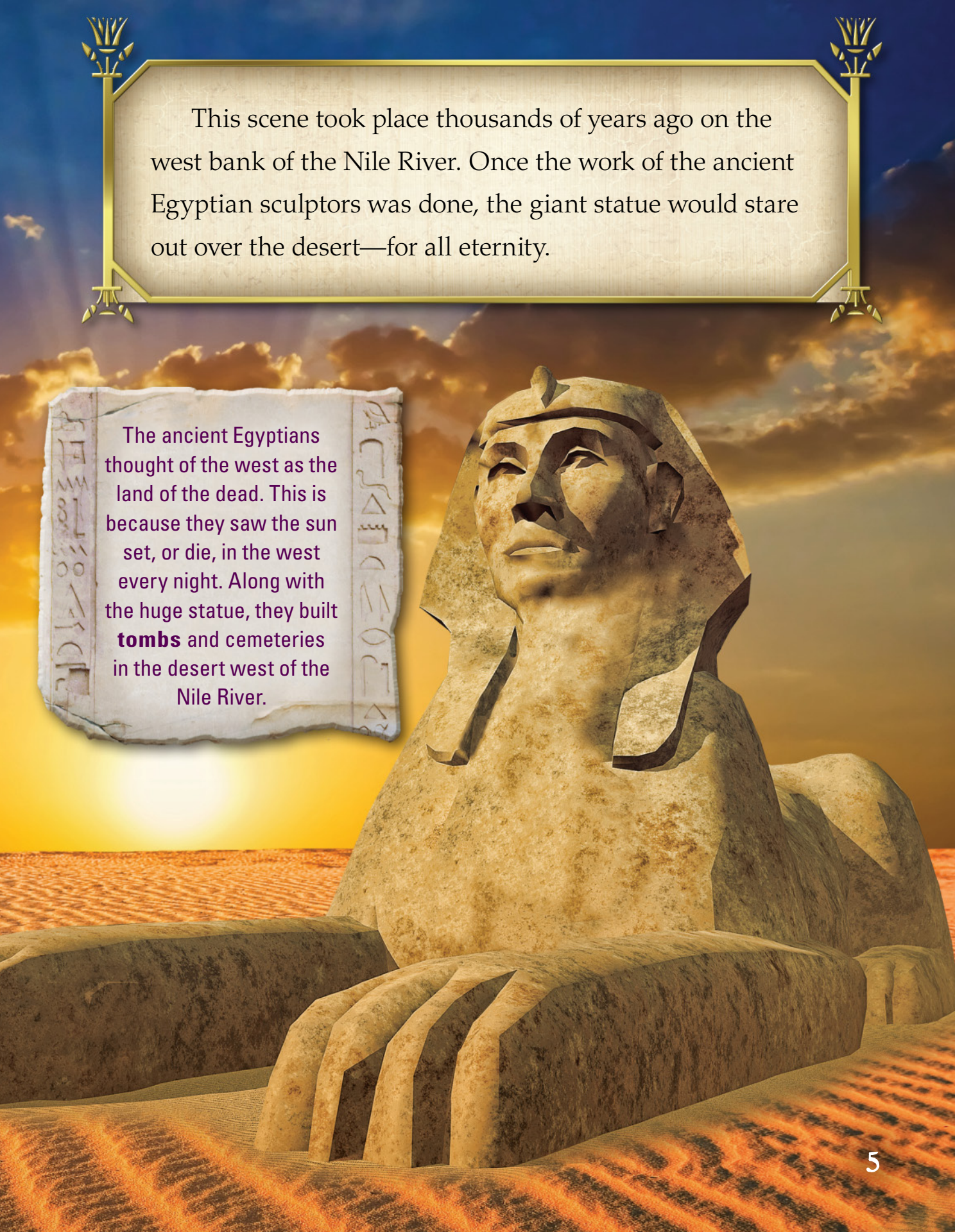
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A Statue in the Land of the Dead

Clank. Clank. Clank. The sound of metal **chisels** hitting rock echoes across a hot, dry desert plain. Rising from the ground is an enormous statue of a half-lion, half-human creature. Under a scorching sun, dozens of **sculptors** are hard at work carving the statue from the rock. Teams of other workers are busy making and sharpening the sculptors' metal tools. Children carry water to the thirsty men. When completed, the statue will be the largest ever created in ancient Egypt.



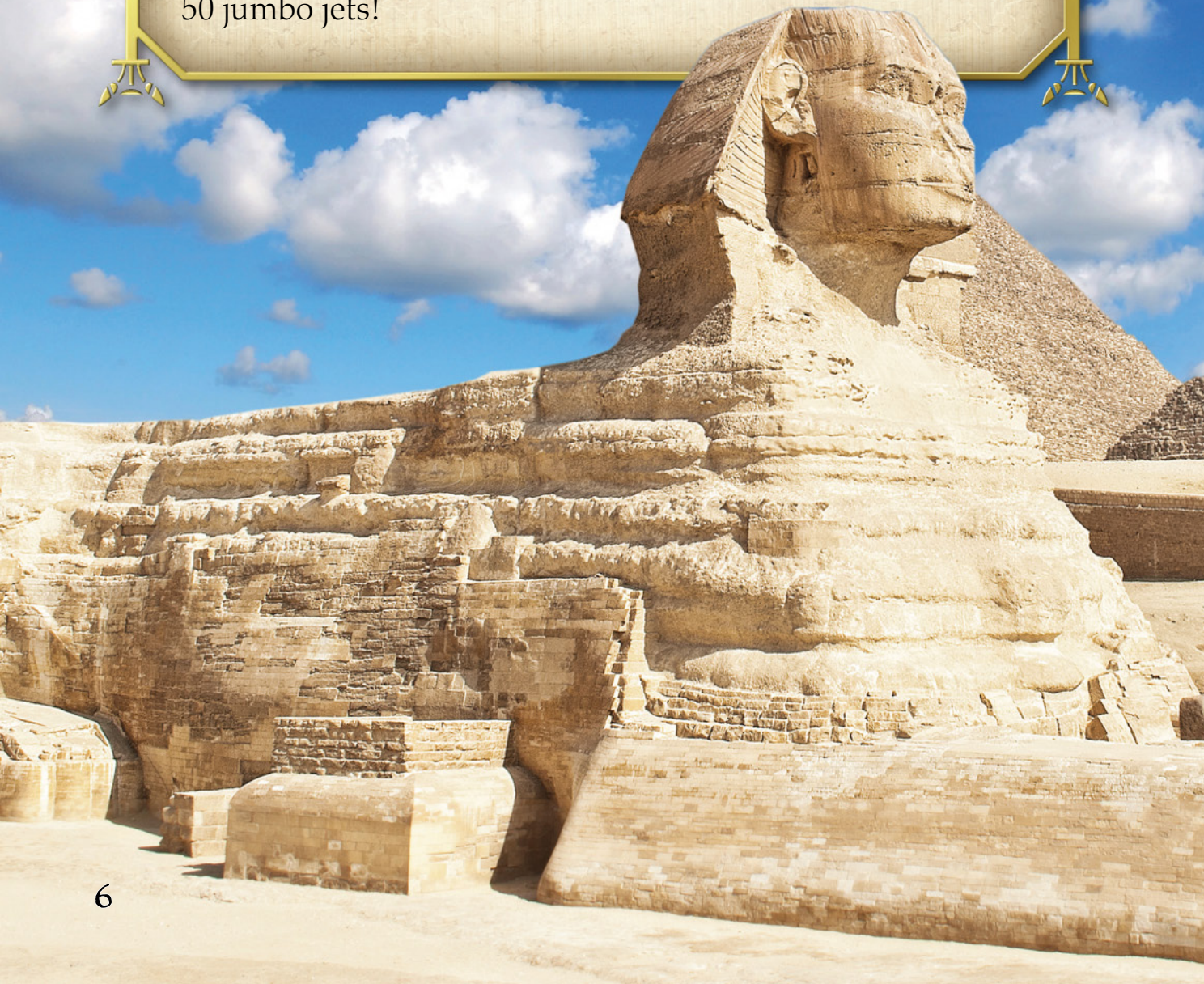


This scene took place thousands of years ago on the west bank of the Nile River. Once the work of the ancient Egyptian sculptors was done, the giant statue would stare out over the desert—for all eternity.

The ancient Egyptians thought of the west as the land of the dead. This is because they saw the sun set, or die, in the west every night. Along with the huge statue, they built **tombs** and cemeteries in the desert west of the Nile River.

The Great Sphinx

About 4,500 years after it was created, the giant statue still stands in the desert. Today, it's known as the Great Sphinx. At 238 feet (73 m) long, it's almost the length of a football field. It stands more than 66 feet (20 m) tall, which is the height of the White House. **Egyptologists** have estimated that the enormous statue weighs as much as 50 jumbo jets!



Every year, thousands of people travel to Egypt from around the world to marvel at the huge statue. Yet, why did the ancient Egyptians build this incredible and unusual creature—with the body of an animal and the head of a human—all those centuries ago?



The Sphinx's human-shaped head is the size of a small house. Its nose either crumbled away or was destroyed hundreds of years ago. If it were still in place, the nose would be almost the length of an adult's body.

Paw

Each of the Sphinx's outstretched front paws is the length of a city bus.