

Holotype
By Anthony Botelho

Testing. One two. One two.

clears throat

This is Professor _____, from the department of zoology and systematics at _____.

The date is _____, time _____.

I realize that this information, and other additional information, is likely to be redacted, due to the sensitive subject of this tape and for my own protection; keeping my identity a secret so as to minimize the chances of my being compromised. Still, I will proceed with full disclosure for any potential posterity and allow those I pass this recording onto to decide what information should and should not be made available.

I am currently standing in the biomedical laboratories of the _____ Institute—or simply the Institute, as I shall here on refer to it as—and am just outside of the main lab. In front of me is the holotype, species yet unnamed, currently thawing after being put on ice to best preserve its tissue.

While I will attempt to be fully objective in my descriptions of the holotype, I do feel the need to state my excitement at the incredible implications of this discovery.

I so rarely have the opportunity to do research in my specialized field, that being cryptozoology, and when I was contacted by the Institute to work on this project I had no choice but to drop everything to be here.

Now before beginning, I should state that it is my professional opinion, and the opinion of most others in my broader field, that it is not customary procedure to perform a necropsy of the holotype of a new species. With such a specimen, especially one so rare, it is usually best practice to observe and describe in the field, and then to illustrate, photograph, or collect alive when appropriate.

This is however an extraordinary circumstance, given the possibility that this specimen is the only one of its kind and given the dire need to understand this animal's biology if it is not. All interested parties, myself and those above me, would have preferred to capture the specimen alive and observe its behaviour before performing the necropsy, though the specimen's behaviour that was observed before death made that option highly unfeasible. Behaviour which I will describe in due time.

This tape will be recorded over multiple sessions. While the specimen is thawing, I will take this time to relate the field notes made available to me as well as giving my initial observations.

Finally, it has been requested that I do not use any kind of visual recording for this procedure. So I will do my utmost to be extremely descriptive.

Now then, the facts:

The specimen was discovered and collected in the Northwest region of India, in Rajasthan along the Aravalli Range. Reports first came from a small town in a largely unpopulated area, surrounded mostly by subtropical forest. The people who live there report that the specimen had been sighted several times over the past three months, and that they eventually decided it best to contact authorities. This information was eventually passed on to the Institute.

The capture is described in the accompanying report as violent, though not much more information is given. The specimen was unfortunately not captured alive, but *is* in one piece with very minimal physical damage.

All other information surrounding the capture has been redacted.

The specimen appears to be equine in nature, in its appearance and in most of its physical features. From a distance, specimen could easily be mistaken for a wild horse. Though there are some key differences.

While the closest reference to the specimen would be a wild horse, its proportions are entirely distinct and do not seem to match any of those of the *Equus* genus.

Specimen's height measures 2.3 meters at the withers—not accounting for the specimen's long, sloped neck—and 2.9 meters in length. That itself is a significant discrepancy from the dimensions of the average horse, though it should also be noted that specimen's height is due in large part to its legs; these measuring 1.6 meters, nearly two thirds of specimen's height. The legs are thin, though seem to have a large amount of lean, dense muscle, and, from what I am told, fully supported the animal's frame.

While on the subject of specimen's legs and this footage, I should state that, for the short time it could be measured, specimen's running speed was clocked at approximately 79 km/h. For reference, the fastest racing horses have been known to clock at top speeds of approximately 70 km/h. It's entirely unknown if specimen was exerting itself and whether it could reach even greater speeds, as difficult as that is to imagine.

Specimen appears emaciated to some extent, though this may be its natural and ideal state. Again, unknown. The skin is pulled taut over the already slender frame, revealing some skeletal features such as the ribs and collar bone. The face is narrow as well, though this more so appears to be the shape of the skull which is long and becomes pointed towards the mouth.

The hair is completely off-white, a shade of alabaster. The length is short, and the hair appears to have fallen off or stopped growing in patches around the underside and

haunches. Again, it is unknown if this colour and patchiness is due to malnutrition or some sort of infection, or if this is simply the animal's natural state.

The specimen's lower legs, below the knees, originally appeared to be black, though upon closer inspection this is discolouration of the hair caused by a dark oily substance excreted from the specimen's skin in these areas.

We are still waiting on a full analysis and toxicology.

Lastly, for the moment, and certainly what first draws the eye when looking at this animal, directly in the centre of the specimen's forehead, there is a large, conical, horn-like growth.

Approximately 17 inches in length, the horn protrudes from the forehead in a conical spiral ending in a needle-sharp tip.

The image this conjures, even in my dry description I'm sure, must be striking and immediate. But, again, I will refrain from flights of fancy.

There's not much more I can do in terms of examination until the specimen is thawed, so I will end this recording here and resume shortly.

~~~~~\*hard static\*~~~~~

Test. Test.

The time is \_\_\_\_\_. I am now with the specimen.

I have just had the chance to perform the necropsy, and have made many additional findings on the specimen's physiology. I must say though that these findings, while certainly exhilarating, are somewhat unsettling. In any case.

First, I can confirm that the oily substance previously mentioned is produced by glands present within the calves.

An early analysis of the substance itself has shown that it appears to reflect polychromatic light in a way similar to an oil film on water, is highly toxic, and that it is highly flammable.

I have now been informed that this last point of information was already somewhat known by the field team. I do wish that information had been deemed as need-to-know for us, as it would have saved our lab hand several third degree burns.

\*sigh\*

Biological function of the substance is totally unknown. And just so. This ignorance is in line with my level of understanding, or lack thereof, of all of the specimen's internal biology, which despite leaving me in complete bafflement, I will **attempt** to describe.

Again, in line with external silhouette, specimen's organs and their layout somewhat match those of an equine or a similar large mammal. However in this case the differences are far more striking.

The stomach is normal, in so far as the organ itself is what I'd expect. Contents... include wild grass, brush foliage, the bones from several birds and smaller mammals, and a single human arm. Slightly digested. The liver, kidneys, pancreas, and lungs also line up with expectations.

The deviations begin with the circulatory system. As far as I can tell, there is no heart. Dissection reveals that where the heart should be, there is a large mass of blue... I've been calling them dendrites, as that is the closest reference I have. They are collected in a large central mass, and then spread out in every direction. I have yet to perform a truly exhaustive dissection, but from what I have seen thus far it appears that these dendrites perform the function of circulation or have co-opted the system. The major arteries and veins are still present, fused to this central mass.

Now... it appears that these dendrites are still alive, or at least still receiving signals. Prodding of any kind prompts movement, a kind of pulsing of the system. While this is somewhat disconcerting, it does in some way reveal the specimen's circulatory process.

As I can see, the veins still carry blood into the central organ from every part of the body. A small incision reveals that this "blood" is a dark shade of brown. The major arteries then carry that blood back out, another incision revealing that this blood is in fact red. However, there is an additional major artery. It seems to travel from the heart toward the legs, carrying a pitch black substance. While there are differences in consistency, I can only conclude that this liquid is taken to the glands mentioned earlier and is there converted to the oil excreted from specimen's skin.

So we appear to have a system where what we'll call "tainted blood" is carried to a central mass of dendrites, "purified," and then carried to other of the body where it will reaccumulate that waste product, while that product itself is carried to glands and converted into a substance that can be removed from the body. A highly potent, flammable substance.

Circulation, however, does not appear to be the end all function of these dendrites. Closer inspection reveals that they have also wrapped around the spine and carry on from there up and toward the brain.

Which brings us to specimen's head and the features thereupon and within. The disparities here are striking and immediate. To begin, the specimen's teeth appear to be a double set of incisors, which go in two rows from the front to the back of the mouth where we'd normally expect there to be molars and premolars. The tongue is small, merely an inch in length, lacking in mobility, and could possibly be vestigial. If this were the case, it would lead me to believe that the specimen was unconcerned with taste or with detecting poison or foulness, and solely concerned with eating for the sake of sustenance.

The eyes are shrunken and pale, and, while I am not an expert on optic biology, they appear by my initial observations to be non-functional. Highly pronounced ears and the presence of a third set of olfactory organs, beyond the nasal cavities and the Jacobson's present in equines, suggest that the specimen has abandoned eyesight altogether and the the eyes themselves are also vestigial.

Now... Hold on. Do you see that? \_\_\_\_\_, do you see that? Can we get somebody in here?

\*large clank, and sounds of clutter and erratic movement\*

Jesus christ! Someone!

~~~~~\*hard static\*~~~~~

exhale

Hello. Uhh... the time is now... It doesn't matter.

Anyone listening is likely wondering what just happened. I'm not sure how this audio will be cut, so I'll tell you in my own words.

As I was about to describe the... horn on the specimen, and my colleague and I were making preparations to remove it, we noticed a disturbance. Some movement.

I realize that what I have described so far is already quite incredible. I wouldn't believe it were it not in front of my own eyes. But know that I speak with full honesty and sober objectivity.

It would seem that this "horn" is, or was, much more than it appears.

It was moving, twitching.

We tried to call for assistance, but it all happened so quickly. The horn, by its own force, ripped itself off the specimen dragging two or three feet of those dendrites with it.

It was flailing wildly, moving by means of the dendrites latching themselves onto anything, and causing absolute havoc.

My colleague and I managed to make it out of the lab, and were met by Institute administration, and several armed security officers.

Before we could begin to try explaining what was happening, we were told to back away as the officers readied their weapons and received hushed orders. All we could do was watch

what unfolded, through the two panes of glass and isolation chamber that separated us and the horn. The thing.

It was a disaster. Three guards went in on their own first, heavily armed. They were dead within seconds.

As soon the doors locked behind them, it rocketed from an unseen corner and pierced straight through the first one. Through kevlar, bone, his heart, and right out the other side.

They started firing, so it becomes a bit less clear then, but before we knew what was happening the second guard was being strangled to death by those dendrites. And that left just one, firing wildly. Poor man, he had it worst.

It's not as though these men and women were incapable. On the contrary. They hit that small target multiple times, we can see that from the impact tremors we later observed. But they just couldn't expect what it would do. Who could?

Despite his efforts, that thing managed to get a hold of the third guard's head, and with a slow and methodical precision began to burrow into his forehead with those dendrites, the ends of which had become like a practiced surgeon's tools. And by the time the rest of us had managed to register our horror, those dendrites were gone and the man was lying still. Now adorned with a large conical horn. Lying still for a moment, until he twitched and then twitched again and then slowly began to stumble to his feet.

Eventually we got the room back down to freezing temperatures, and motion ceased.

It was difficult to kill the thing. Extreme cold clearly didn't work, or extreme heat. Not fire, not electrocution, not deoxygenation. But eventually we found that strong acid would do it, and finally it was dead.

The acid has left analysis difficult, but we can ascertain some details. The horn-structure itself seems to be made of a super durable chitin-like material, and houses an entirely separate organism than the specimen. The internal organs were destroyed, but we were able to examine the muscles that we believe are responsible for retracting and extending the dendrites as well as an inner ring of teeth located where the horn latches on to other organisms. Electric prodding of the dendrites still activates small twitch motions.

There is little that the scientific team knows, and not much more that we currently agree on about the two specimen, but there is one overwhelming consensus among us. The horn is some sort of macro parasite or parasitoid that latches onto a larger animals and co-opts all bodily function.

As we searched the lab after finally destroying the horn, we found a pasty matter near the point of exit from the specimen's head. The chemical composition of the paste, and the empty space inside specimen's cranium, leads us to believe that this was once the brain.

The implications of all these findings are astonishing, and even more so now that the Institute has deemed the whole matter dire enough to fully brief the science team on the specimen's capture.

As I previously stated, reports first came from the North of India, from a small town. They had sighted the creature several times over the past three months, though what I did not know is that they only contacted authorities after a young girl from the village, believing the specimen to be some sort of mythical creature, tried to befriend it and had her right arm bitten clean off from above the elbow.

Information was passed along, and the Institute, being an authority on these matters, deployed units in short turn. They combed the forests in the region for two days before making contact. Conflict was immediate and extremely violent. Several operatives were gored, and the animal was shot with several tranquilizers before retreating into the forest. After three hours, operatives were able to lead the holotype into an open area and surround it with air support.

The mission lead describes in his report that at this moment the holotype began spraying an unknown accelerant, which we now know to be the oil excreted from the legs, in incredible quantities. The mere action of the oil splattering against the team—coupled with the scorching air temperature that day—was enough to cause ignition, and started a brush fire. Six operatives immediately in the creature's wake were immolated in an instant.

The holotype then began to shake and heave, before collapsing to the ground. It was dead when team members closed in and checked vitals.

Another colleague of mine, an expert in genetics and molecular evolution, will be reporting their findings in an entirely separate recording, as there is a whole other wealth of information to dispense on that subject. But I believe some of their findings are extremely important and should be noted here. Not just the sequencing of the holotype, the specimen, but this information when coupled with the additional sequencing done of the young man that the horn latched onto.

The specimen's DNA was wholly its own, but shared an undeniable likeness to that of the modern wild horse. There were additions, and absences, and entire rewrites of sections of the DNA, but the patterns and likeness are there. And what my colleague saw when sequencing that young man, were the beginnings of those exact same kinds of changes. After only minutes of being attached.

It's only my hypothesis, but I truly believe that this animal was once a horse and not the cryptozoological wonder I had dreamed it was. It was taken over by this parasite, which I have proposed naming "The Alicorn Parasite," taken complete control of, and had its DNA rewritten to the extent where it became an entirely new species, expressing completely new physical traits and using the body's energy resources to fuel horrific abilities.

We absolutely must determine this parasite's origin, and if there are more of them out there. Some members of the team are speculating about the possibility of extraterrestrial origins, others are looking to history. To the records and writings of strange, single-horned beasts spoken of by the pre-modern Greeks, the Chinese, the Persians. Beasts that lived in the ancient Indus Valley and other far flung places.

I shudder to think about this line of speculation. If this creature has been on Earth that long, and is capable of such potent and cruel proliferation, what chance do we have when the others should choose to appear?