

A number of races in *The Prophecy Keepers* are based on creatures described by Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History*. The relevant passages (here translated by John Bostock and H. T. Riley in 1855, although I prefer the Loeb Classical Library edition, translated by H. Rackham) are listed below. To read more, visit:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Plin.+Nat.+toc>

CENTICORE *aka yale, eale* (Book 8, Chapter 30)

Æthiopia produces the lynx in abundance, and the sphinx, which has brown hair and two mammæ on the breast, as well as many monstrous kinds of a similar nature; horses with wings, and armed with horns, which are called pegasi; the crocotta, an animal which looks as though it had been produced by the union of the wolf and the dog, for it can break any thing with its teeth, and instantly on swallowing it digest it with the stomach; monkeys, too, with black heads, the hair of the ass, and a voice quite unlike that of any other animal. There are oxen, too, like those of India, some with one horn, and others with three; the leucrocotta, a wild beast of extraordinary swiftness, the size of the wild ass, with the legs of a stag, the neck, tail, and breast of a lion, the head of a badger, a cloven hoof, the mouth slit up as far as the ears, and one continuous bone instead of teeth; it is said, too, that this animal can imitate the human voice.

Among the same people, there is also found an animal called eale; it is the size of the river-horse, has the tail of the elephant, and is of a black or tawny colour. It has also the jaws of the wild boar, and horns that are moveable, and more than a cubit in length, so that, in fighting, it can employ them alternately, and vary their position by presenting them directly or obliquely, according as necessity may dictate.

But the wild bulls which this country produces are the fiercest of all; they are larger than our domestic bull, and exceed all the others in swiftness; are of a tawny colour, with azure eyes, and the hair turned the contrary way; while the jaws open as far as the ears, and the horns are as moveable as those of the eale. The hide of this animal is as hard as flint, and effectually resists all wounds. These creatures pursue all the other wild beasts, while they themselves can only be taken in pitfalls, where they always perish from excess of rage.

Ctesias informs us, that among these same Æthiopians, there is an animal found, which he calls the mantichora; it has a triple row of teeth, which fit into each other like those of a comb, the face and ears of a man, and azure eyes, is of the colour of blood, has the body of the lion, and a tail ending in a sting, like that of the scorpion. Its voice resembles the union of the sound of the flute and the trumpet; it is of excessive swiftness, and is particularly fond of human flesh.

FENMINE *aka amphisbæna*

Book 8, CHAP. 35.—DIFFERENT KINDS OF SERPENTS.

With reference to serpents, it is generally known, that they assume the colour of the soil in which they conceal themselves. The different species of them are innumerable. The cerastes has little horns, often four in number, projecting from the body, by the movement of which it attracts birds, while the rest of its body lies concealed.

The amphisbæna has two heads, that is to say, it has a second one at the tail, as though one mouth were too little for the discharge of all its venom.

Some serpents have scales, some a mottled skin, and they are all possessed of a deadly poison. The jaculus darts from the branches of trees; and it is not only to our feet that the serpent is formidable, for these fly through the air even, just as though they were hurled from an engine.

The neck of the asp puffs out, and there is no remedy whatever against its sting, except the instant excision of the affected part. This reptile, which is thus deadly, is possessed of this one sense, or rather affection; the male and the female are generally found together, and the one cannot live without the other; hence it is that, if one of them happens to be killed, the other takes incredible pains to avenge its death. It follows the slayer of its mate, and will single him out among ever such a large number of people, by a sort of instinctive knowledge; with this object it overcomes all difficulties, travels any distance, and is only to be avoided by the intervention of rivers or an accelerated flight.

It is really difficult to decide, whether Nature has altogether been more liberal of good or of evil. First of all, however, she has given to this pest but weak powers of sight, and has placed the eyes, not in the front of the head, so that it may see straight before it, but in the temples, so that it is more frequently put in motion by the approach of the footstep than through the sight. (24.) The ichneumon, too, is its enemy to the very death.

Book VIII, CHAP. 33.—THE SERPENTS CALLED BASILISKS.

There is the same power also in the serpent called the basilisk. It is produced in the province of Cyrene, being not more than twelve fingers in length. It has a white spot on the head, strongly resembling a sort of a diadem. When it hisses, all the other serpents fly from it: and it does not advance its body, like the others, by a succession of folds, but moves along upright and erect upon the middle. It destroys all shrubs, not only by its contact, but those even that it has breathed upon; it burns up all the grass too, and breaks the stones, so tremendous is its noxious influence. It was formerly a general belief that if a man on horseback killed one of these animals with a spear, the poison would run up the weapon and kill, not only the rider, but the horse as well. To this dreadful monster the effluvium of the weasel is fatal, a thing that has been tried with success, for kings have often desired to see its body when killed; so true is it that it has pleased Nature that there should be nothing without its antidote. The animal is thrown into the hole of the basilisk, which is easily known from the soil around it being infected. The weasel destroys the basilisk by its odour, but dies itself in this struggle of nature against its own self.

Isidore of Seville, in his *Etymologies* (Book 12:4:20), claims that the amphisbaena has eyes that shine like lamps, and that it, unlike other serpents, goes out in the cold:

Amphisbaena dicta, eo quod duo capita habeat, unum in loco suo, alterum in cauda, currens ex utroque capite, tractu corporis circulato. Haec sola serpentium frigori se committit, prima omnium procedens. De qua idem Lucanus (9, 719): Et gravis in geminum (twin) vergens (bend) caput amphisbaena. Cuius oculi lucent veluti lucernae.

Loosely translated:

“It is called an amphisbaena, because it has two heads, one in the proper place, the second one on the tail. It can move its body in a circular course in the direction of either head. This serpent alone undertakes the cold, the first of all to proceed. In the same way, Lucanus [refers to]: the dread Amphisbaena with its twin head curving. Whose eyes shine like lamps.”

PANOTII

Book 4, Chapter 27 (Pliny):

THE ISLANDS OF THE EUXINE. THE ISLANDS OF THE NORTHERN OCEAN.

But now, in conformity with the plan which I originally proposed, the remaining portions of this gulf must be described. As for its seas, we have already made mention of them. The Hellespont has no islands belonging to Europe that are worthy of mention. In the Euxine there are, at a distance of a mile and a half from the European shore, and of fourteen from the mouth of the Strait, the two Cyanæan islands, by some called the Symplegades, and stated in fabulous story to have run the one against the other; the reason being the circumstance that they are separated by so short an interval, that while to those who enter the Euxine opposite to them they appear to be two distinct islands, but if viewed in a somewhat oblique direction they have the appearance of becoming gradually united into one. On this side of the Ister there is the single island of the Apolloniates, eighty miles from the Thracian Bosphorus; it was from this place that M. Lucullus brought the Capitoline Apollo.

Those islands which are to be found between the mouths of the Ister we have already mentioned. Before the Borysthenes is Achillea previously referred to, known also by the names of Leuce and Macaron. Researches which have been made at the present day place this island at a distance of 140 miles from the Borysthenes, of 120 from Tyra, and of fifty from the island of Peuce. It is about ten miles in circumference. The remaining islands in the Gulf of Carcinites are Cephalonnesos, Rhosphodusa, and Macra. Before we leave the Euxine, we must not omit to notice the opinion expressed by many writers that all the interior seas take their rise in this one as the principal source, and not at the Straits of Gades. The reason they give for this supposition is not an improbable one--the fact that the tide is always running out of the Euxine and that there is never any ebb.

We must now leave the Euxine to describe the outer portions of Europe. After passing the Riphæan mountains we have now to follow the shores of the Northern Ocean on the left, until we arrive at Gades. In this direction a great number of islands are said to exist that have no name; among which there is one which lies opposite to Scythia, mentioned under the name of Raunonia, and said to be at a distance of the day's sail from the mainland; and upon which, according to Timæus, amber is thrown up by the waves in the spring season.

As to the remaining parts of these shores, they are only known from reports of doubtful authority. With reference to the Septentrional or Northern Ocean; Hecatæus calls it, after we have passed the mouth of the river Parapanisus, where it washes the Scythian shores, the Amalchian sea, the word 'Amalchian' signifying in the language of these races, frozen. Philemon again says that it is called Morimarusa or the "Dead Sea" by the Cimbri, as far as the Promontory of Rubeas, beyond which it has the name of the Cronian¹³ Sea. Xenophon of Lampsacus tells us that at a distance of three days' sail from the shores of Scythia, there is an island of immense size called Baltia which by Pytheas is called Basilia. Some islands called Oönæ are said to be here, the inhabitants of which live on the eggs of birds and oats; and others again upon which human beings are produced with the feet of horses, thence called Hippopodes. Some other islands are also mentioned as those of the Panotii, the people of which have ears of such extraordinary size as to cover the rest of the body, which is otherwise left naked.