

The Thirteenth Sign

by Brenda Bishop Blakey

First the birds dropped from the sky—all at once,
their dive final and unexpected, unexplained.
Then fish turned belly up, their lives turned off en masse.
Amid the scurry we waited for answers.
Scientists said earth changed the tilt of its axis;
not to worry, it does so every 41,000 years.
Subsequently, there will be a few changes.
If you were a Libra before, now you're a Virgo.
If you were a Sagittarius, now there's a new sign—
Ophiuchus, (*Οφιούχος*) from the Greek,
The 13th sign: The Serpent Bearer.
Another minor detail, the change in tilt
was the switch to start the next catastrophe.
Be it ice age or nuclear holocaust, the timeframe
is unclear, but it is eventual, inevitable.
I open my copy of *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* and reread
St. Patrick's Rune. I'm twelve again and hopeful.
I grasp it firmly to my chest, a breastplate
bearing magical power to thwart all danger.
Now, we wait for the sun to right the wrongs,
To quell the stirrings of a planet moved.

