

Ballad of an Apocalypse

by X. J. Kennedy

In a panic the Royal Astronomer
 Falls prostrate before the throne
 And declares, "O King,
 It's a terrible thing—
 The cosmos has come undone!

"I have seen through the lens of prophetic dream
 All the zodiac fly apart
 And a total eclipse
 With devouring lips
 Munch the moon like a mincemeat tart.

"Lion and Virgin lie locked in love,
 The Twins weigh down Libra's scales,
 And the terrible Crab
 Has got in his grab
 Both the silvery Fishes' tails.

"Never yet have my prophesies proved wrong.
 Not a minaret shall remain.
 Take your seventeen wives
 And run for your lives!
 All creation's insane—insane!"

The King twirls a finger around his ear,
 Takes a swig from a golden cup,
 Draws a handmaid to hand
 And bawls a command,
 "Lock this blithering idiot up!"

Indeed, since that day decades have passed
 And methodical stars still ply
 Their appointed rounds,
 With inaudible sounds,
 No madder than you or I.