

ON THE SHORE OF THE COSMOS

(Title inspired by the first chapter of Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*, 1980, *The Shores of the Cosmic Ocean*).

The noctilucent clouds, ice bright against the twilight candlelight,
Hang high in the northern night sky as the clock approaches midnight,
Their eerie waves and whispers illuminated by sunlight,
Take our gaze far above on June's twelfth night.

The distance from the ground to meet this summer friend,
Is equivalent from Watford to Northampton end to end,
But they are a midsummer phenomena six weeks they spend,
In our night sky viewed north like a solstice bookend.

These clouds really do represent the shore of our world,
For they are at the edge of our atmosphere as they dance and swirl,
Drifting alone blue, white, and pearl,
In the hierarchy of the Cosmos, their position is an Earl.

This interstellar visitor on our doorstep dazzles us
Night shining ice crystals warmed by the cosmic rust
The astronomical watch can be set and must,
For their dance is short-lived blessed in angel dust.