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Before and After the Darkness

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The Dream of Stairs: A Poem Cycle
was originally printed privately as a posthumous
memorial volume in 1975, a year after Susan Noble's
untimely death in 1974 at the age of 31.

'The muse has struck me!' Susan announced brightly in 1965
with typically light-hearted self-depreciation, and from that
time onwards she wrote the poems in batches of half a dozen
or more, in what she described as manic bursts of creativity.
But these poems are anything but light-hearted, and even a first
reading will reveal clearly that levity is not on the menu in a universe
'Where there are no jokes / And people do not pretend.'

Susan's output in the last ten years of her life was prolific,
but a clear thematic structure and underlying development
dictated the final order of that original poignant collection.
To mark the fortieth anniversary of Susan's death, this much
expanded edition makes the book publicly available
for the first time.

Susan's exceptional sensitivity was reflected in the poems
that make up *The Dream of Stairs* and its companion volumes,
Inside the Stretch of My Heart, *Before and After the Darkness*
and *Collected Poems*. In these intense, haunting poems,
she chronicles her personal response to the world
around her, while vividly portraying the inner landscape
of her mental and emotional struggle.

Two further volumes, *A Flock of Blackbirds: Selected Fiction* and
Drifting Between Empty Tramlines (a novel) are also being published.

Profits from the sales of all six volumes are being donated to
three charities: Mind, the Samaritans and Sane.

Front cover painting: *Jacob's Ladder* by William Blake (c. 1799–c. 1806),
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THE DREAM OF STAIRS
SUSAN NOBLE

AESOP
Poets
Oxford

THE DREAM OF STAIRS

A POEM CYCLE

SUSAN NOBLE

AESOP POETS

About the author

Brought up in South London, Susan Noble, was the second of three children. Her childhood was enriched by being part of a large and closely-knit Jewish family. Unfortunately stricken by polio (then known as infantile paralysis) in her early years, Susan went through life with a degree of physical handicap which she was to overcome with courage and determination.

Educated at Croydon High School, Susan studied English at Somerville College, Oxford. After graduating, she worked in London, first at the Royal National Institute for the Blind, dictating books for transcription into Braille, and later at the National Central Library in London, where she qualified as a Chartered Librarian.

Facsimiles of some of the original typescripts and manuscripts that make up this book are available online at:

www.aesopbooks.com/susannoble

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