

Armor Against Death

I
At last the hour of peace, the voices stilled,
The contest ended at last. The citadel
Is saved, and the sudden ambushes are over.
The night is lovely and quiet where we dwell.

The armor of love, invisible, inward-shining . . . .
Putting it on together, let us sing.
No weapon can penetrate it, nor one arrow.
O, unassailable, O, perfect thing.

II
As silver frost upon a flower, the spell is laid
Upon my heart; as snow falling lightly
Whitens a ruined field, my heart is made
Lovelier than itself, transfigured brightly.

How beautiful the world! But, heart, you know
Your own enchantment, brief as frost or snow.

BETTY RICHART

Return

DOROTHY STEINMEIER

Martha smiled the way she always
smiled when someone said something
nice to her. Someone was always
saying something nice to her, it
seemed.

Years ago when she had spoken
her first "piece" on the Children's
Day at the church and had forgotten
the last three lines, she had cried up-
on the stage in front of all the church
people. Her mother had kissed her
and said it didn't matter. Her pink
ruffled dress made her look like a
doll and she didn't need to say any-
thing. Her daddy had told her that
he would get her an ice-cream cone.
Aunt Sue had remarked that her
curls were pretty. Her mother's
cousin Sam had chucked her under
the chin and said he would let her
ride his horse down the lane and back
next day.

Yet she hadn't wanted everyone
to be so nice to her. She wished that
someone would tell her that she
ought to be spanked for forgetting
those lines when she knew them and
that she made too big a scene for
a seven-year old. But no one had.

When they were twelve years old
and she and her cousin Jane had run
away down to the wood, slipped out
their lunch in the morning and stay-
ed away all day in the wood playing
Indians, and hadn't come back until
nearly dark, everybody had been
frantic. Jane's mother was there, too.
She was awfully worried about Jane,
but she had spanked her hard and
made her stay in the house all next
day.

It had hurt Martha to see Jane cry,
but Martha's mother had cuddled her
and said that she was so glad her
darling was back and she never want-
ed her to run off again. Grandmoth-
er had baked the prettiest little par-
ty cake, just doll-size and with pink