

At the testing site

by [Marda Messick](#) in the [March 9, 2022](#) issue

She was waiting in mask and gloves  
for the next in line  
in a trailer at the COVID testing site,  
her rhinestone sandals not visible  
but I knew her  
by the soft curve of her shoulder  
and called her name.

She said as she swabbed  
the inside of my nose,  
my eyes tearing up,  
It's a shame we can't hug.

As we did when she came  
to lift and wipe and wash  
my husband in his prison body,  
sometimes bringing her polite boy  
who slept on the couch in his clothes.

As we did when she left  
in the morning dark  
and held me and said  
everything would be alright,  
which it was and it wasn't.

After her baby girl's baby died  
and the car broke down  
she quit her day job bathing people  
in several counties  
for crap pay and no mileage.  
The COVID gives her regular hours  
and it's not far to the house.

So good to see you,  
wish we could hug.

I stepped away from her station  
as if from an altar,  
still tasting the goodness  
of a veiled radiance  
who is always waiting  
for the next in line.