

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.