

Small Talk

by Alison Luterman

At least once a day I trudge up 38th,
take a right on Nevil,
and wind around the little green patch of park,
past empty tennis courts
and the deserted soccer field
where right now a masked man
is playing with a remote-control race car
all by himself. I plod up Brookdale,
wearing my own mask. Anonymous,
featureless, I'm free to be anyone:
a bank robber, or a surgeon,
or a biblical bride
tricking my unsuspecting groom
into marrying the wrong sister.
Although, as I climb the hill
and start to sweat, I confess I pull
the thing down for some air.
When I see someone walking toward me,
we do our pandemic do-si-do, one of us
dancing off the sidewalk to avoid the other.
"Beautiful day!" says the stranger.
"Yes, yes, the roses!" I reply,
and we wave from afar.
This talk I used to call small
in the days I used to call ordinary.
