

# nicole adabunu

## BONES ARCHED LIKE FLOWERS

*after alejandra pizarnik*

in the middle of a rain storm i take my neighbor's dog  
for a walk, as promised. i'd just been laid off

and i needed the money, and who doesn't love  
sending Black girls into sharpened water.

she watches me attach the leash.  
goodmorning ma'am is working from home

today, per the echo of her pinned fingers. her dog  
suffers from dementia, cannot hold a sit

without his legs sliding from under  
him, bites when his memory brackets.

on our walk he leans against me like a better  
ghost. i want breathing to stay

away from me. this can't be unlearned.  
and the dog, just himself, no talk of selfish

for letting the ache reach his eyes. am i lucky  
that guilt isn't flexible? perhaps this is all

i ever was, considering the audience before  
the room, because nurse beth can't live without me,

because she cuffed me to the hospital bed to book  
mark the animal, my face into the hot bowl

of her neck, five unsupervised minutes.  
the dog mistakes another dog for something nearer.

sometimes dying gets distracted. the wind slants  
the rain until it burns, until we're glossy

at the traffic light. i could stand this  
in my sleep.