At the city pound

By Vincent O'Sullivan

I'm in charge of a cage. I know those that won't. 
I don't mean can't. Just won't. There's a roster 
for Tuesdays, Fridays. Dogs to die.

The disconsolate, the abandoned, those with recurrent 
symptoms, the incorrigible mutt — oh, a dozen 
choices by way of reasons. Even so,

some won't. Won't play along once their number's 
up. The "rainbow bridge" in the offing 
as the posher clinics put it, a pig's ear

as a final treat, a venison chew, the profession 
behaving beautifully at a time like this. 
Still, those that won't. Won't go nicely, I mean,

with a gaze to melt, a last slobbered lick. 
Those with a soul's defiance, though embarrassment 
in the lunchroom should you come at that one!

Even after the bag is zipped, you feel it: 
*We're real at the end as you are, buster. We sniff the wind. What say if we say it together?* Won't.

Source: *Poetry* (February 2018)