

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 slobbed 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)