

"You look bad, man," they said. "It'll be your last chance."

They'll be back around in the boat later, so I need to say goodbye. But I can't. If I want to live, I need to say goodbye. He wouldn't - no matter how hungry, how hot and how afraid he was, he would never leave me.

We've been friends for years. He's warmed my feet on winter nights. And I'd eyed him when a couch cushion turned up gutted - "Bad! Don't you ever do that again." Then I'd shrugged. Can't stay mad at someone who is never mad at me.

The water sits at the edge of the rooftop and the heat is bearing down. The shingles have rubbed my fingers raw and torn his paws. I cling to him, my arm around his strong neck. He struggles with the heat, his long hair matted down by my sweaty hands. But he never tires of my clinging, he never pulls away.

The water kept rising floor by floor, pouring through my broken windows. We had nowhere else to go but up. When I thought that I would die here on this roof, when no other soul in the world was here to comfort me, he lay beside me all through the watery night.

He's so calm. I am not. My skin is blistered from the sun, and my lips are cracked, my mouth rough and spitless. There is no help from outside. The guys in the boat are just guys with a boat - they offered me a ride. "No dog, man," they said. "We got one more stop - we'll be back. Last chance."

I can't leave him. He wouldn't. I can't. He'd die for me.

I open my sticky eyes and I see them coming - an aluminum oasis. The killing sun sets behind them - silhouettes with waving arms. My body has stiffened and I feel the fever and chills - sun poisoning. A hulking figure climbs onto my roof raft. I feel the thud of his feet hammer through my body. On my back, I cannot move - I can only open my eyes. A warm muzzle rests on my shoulder; brown eyes watch over me.

Hands grab my shoulders and the muzzle disappears from my sight. Lifted, my body is pulled, my heels dragging across the grit of the shingles.

"No," I whisper. "I can't."

My head rolls to the side and I see his fur lifting in the breeze as he sits near the peak of the roof, tongue lolling. The sunset colors him orange and golden.

"Please," I beg with no sound.

I am lumped onto the floor of the boat, cool metal against my back. The boat thrusts forward with grunts and rowing. No tears fall with my voiceless sobs.