

A Declaration, Love¹

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It is nothing

to be surrounded by fallen prayers—this is city.

I ash on shimmers. They no more implicate my day than dogs
who sniff for the piss of other dogs.

Perhaps that's what prayers do. Regardless
of the city, their barks at muted streets
halfway up a fence, shifting

like migrants. Is the lie, "Here's a person?"

Is the part to believe, "We love?" Like a cut

jungle burns to city, we ash

on shimmers. Prayers

swallow the revelation of you. You, a refugee, pray

to stay. Mumble toward your final words

in a detention center slash library. I and thousands

check out books, exit casual

past your wall. You noose your sheets rather than be sent. Sniffing

at me for the dog piss of this city, as if it sniffs
your final words, a dog. I describe

to make things easier. My prayer is the dog I shoo
on broom-filled nights. It feels good,

old shoe, it feels: these nights under

1 from *The Flayed City* (Kaya Press)

the safety of a visa, a good that never held

your name. I do not sing: singing changes out my eyes.
You're dead, so it's nothing

if I slit your throat—prayer. Cowl my face

in your blood. My silence halfway

up the nose of a sniffing dog. That jealous dog,
it bares its teeth in every passing prayer.