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THREE POEMS BY ALISON EASTLEY

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23 Degrees of Freedom Isn't Enough

1.)

There are 23 degrees
of freedom
available solely in the hand

2.)

above the wrist.
There are 27 bones in the human hand.
The metacarpus, or palm,

3.)

is composed of 5 long
metacarpal bones.
It was sometime after 7 when you phoned.

4.)

The music in the background
was worse than any karaoke. Your hand
may have been damp

5.)

downing drinks.
Your palm had not grown hairs,
well, not that you said.

7.)

And I doubt you counted the bones
of your hand.
23 degrees of freedom

8.)

is never enough.

There are other parts of the body to consider
when you visit

9.)

a strip-club,
then say it's a 'comprehensive study'
of all the other men

10.)

and not you
longing to be teased like a cheap
lie some call kitsch.

He Falls Asleep

He plays pool in the
side-bar where the women and the poles

aren't visible except it didn't happen.
He was in the crowd,

somewhere near
the front. Then he asked the waitress

if the champagne room
is available except it didn't happen

quite like that. The club
used to be real. Now it's weird how he

falls asleep without
mentioning he was drunk,

that a small pool of bright blood
around his mouth didn't happen

because he wasn't obnoxious
and there wasn't a fight although earlier

on in the night
he wondered as he did about so many things

that didn't happen
extravagantly as he imagined a trip

could be a journey
full of strippers he knows exactly

what they think
if only they'd talk to him about their low

self esteem, their body
performing the way an argument ends.

Needles and Pins

Frida kept her ampoules of drugs
hidden
behind Diego's underwear
in the drawer beside her bed

where she screamed
for her friends to find a soft spot
she hadn't painted like a retablo
without the miracle of not

vomiting
when introduced to necrotic
flesh which is another of Frida's
tricks, how she forced her visitors

to take a peek
and then of course, she'd laugh.
This was probably the euphoria
if you like, the high of injecting drugs,

the swirl of a room made smaller
than false hope invalids pray all the
surgery will keep them passive
with vertical scars

taking them far
from the straight and narrow
some say it's surreal wining and dining
fabulous painters

who seem far too injured
to ever be be real.

Alison Eastley I live in a small non tropical island with my two teenage sons, a staffy/border collie pup and on a good weekend, with my lover, Larry. Previous work has been published in Double Dare Press, *Mannequin Envy*, *The Absinthe Literary Review*, *Word Riot* with forthcoming work appearing soon in *apostrophe*.

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