

Aloha

by Epiphany Ferrell

It's a little known fact that eels are often lost in translation — only the spotted variety, not the striped or the common and certainly not the electric. The hippie girl who told me this lived her whole life in Montana. I didn't want to insult her intelligence — she was a very, very in-tune young woman — so I didn't ask how eels were ever involved in translation.

I think about that lovely hippie girl and her knowledge of eels, sometimes. I asked her name, and she said, “Aloha.” I told her it was a lovely name. She told me the word means both “hello” and “goodbye” and she danced away from without a backward glance, such so that I never knew if she was telling me “hello” as in “follow me” or “goodbye” as in “get lost creep.” Maybe it really was her name.

I was in London last year, it was raining, I was looking for eel pie and wondering if it was really made from eels and if so, were they spotted? I saw a woman who looked like my hippie girl, aged appropriately. I ran to catch up with her, fell into step with her on the street. She carried a burlap re-usable grocery bags stuffed with all kinds of exotic teas — ginseng and ginger, green chai and red oolong. I looked at her sideways and asked her if she'd been to Montana.

“Aloha,” she said, crossing the street against traffic. A bus — one of those double-deckers with tourists on top — went between us, splashing me with the habitat of a million spotted eels.

