

Magellan Expeditions

One.

On the Pacific coast between Los Angeles and San Diego, The Esperanza Resort welcomes visitors from all over the world. It is an old, historic, getaway that in the past was frequented by presidents, movie moguls, and millionaire industrialists. Today's tourists are made to feel as welcome as yesterday's celebrities.

There is a geometry to the lobby that allows the Front Desk Clerk, Shelly, to see her friend and housemate, Almira, who is sitting thirty feet away at the Concierge Desk, and for both of them to see the main entrance another thirty feet away at a different angle. They are hard-working young ladies who appreciate their jobs, the pleasant work environment, the Esperanza prestige, and they also like being able to chat back and forth on their laptops all day. They sometimes make fun of the lobby music which is often a Musak version of California Beach Music.

Shelly is 22 years old, she's a pretty California Girl; blonde, blue-eyed, and wholesome. She looks up from her laptop when a young, attractive Asian couple walk up to her work station podium.

She smiles, and says, "Good afternoon."

The young man nods, "Good afternoon, we would like information about tours."

Shelly steps from behind the podium, “Yes, please, follow me. Our Concierge, Almira, is right over here. What’s your name?”

“I am Katsu, this is my wife Shima.”

Standing in front of the Concierge desk is an older, tan, well-kept couple wearing pastel shorts, tops, visors, and white athletic shoes. Almira is standing behind her desk concluding a conversation with them.

“One of the valets will take you up to the Clubhouse, or you can just grab a golf cart. Now, let me know if there is anything else I can do for you, and please, enjoy your stay with us.”

They smile and walk away as Shelly and the Asian couple stop in front of Almira’s desk.

Shelly looks from Almira to the couple, “Almira, this is Katsu and Shima, they’re interested in learning more about the tours that are offered here.”

Almira says hello, and motions toward two big chairs that are arranged in front of her desk. As Shelly walks away, they sit down and Almira hands each of them a bifold brochure while saying, “This is a company we use that offers a wide range of activities. They aren’t associated with the Resort, but we’ve found them to be very dependable and good at what they do.”

Katsu and Shima settle back in their chairs and look over the listing of outdoor adventures they can choose from.

Magellan Expeditions

Southern California's Place for Adventure

Experienced, professional guides ensure a memorable experience. Choose from our extensive menu or tell us what you are interested in. Weather sometimes determines availability. Must be 18 or over.

Call 949.380.1807 anytime.

Free diving - snorkeling in the Pacific

Scuba diving - and certification programs from pool to ocean

Surfing lessons - Hang 10 like a pro in half a day

Kayaking - river or ocean

Spear fishing - fishing trips often result in an evening cookout

Charter boat deep sea fishing - mounting service available

Mountain stream fly fishing – everything provided

Rock climbing - indoor and outdoor

Hiking – 5 to 12-mile guided loop trails in remote locations

ATV excursions - mountains or desert

Horseback riding - and full moon night rides

Mountain climbing - beginner or advanced

Sky diving - indoor and outdoor

Snow Skiing – seasonal

Almira allows them a minute then, “Where are you from?”

Shima looks up, “Tokyo, and you?”

“The Philippines, General Santos.”

Then Almira says something in Japanese, Shima tilts her head, smiles, answers in Japanese, then asks a question in Japanese to which Almira replies by holding her thumb and forefinger about an inch apart and making a small reply.

Almira is 25 years old, and like most Filipinos she is very small, tiny. She has long black hair down to her waist, and is considered by most people to be gorgeous. She elicits a response from everyone who sees her; some women admire her; some women don't. Most men approve, but everyone has a response, one way or another.

Katsu leans toward Shima and points to one of the options on the paper. She wrinkles her nose and points to another one. He frowns and shakes his head, she looks away, resigned. He shows his choice to Almira.

“What is this one like?”

Almira brightens, “Oh, that's a lot of fun. I've been on that tour, and most of the others. With this ATV experience, you get to choose between going up in the mountains or out in the desert. I'd recommend the mountains this time of year, it's pretty hot out in the desert right now. And you get to drive the ATV yourself, the guide leads the way on another ATV so you get the full, hands-on experience.”

Shima asks, “Is it safe?”

Katsu glances at her from the corner of his eye and makes a small smirk.

Almira says, “Oh yes, completely safe. Would you like for me to arrange this for tomorrow morning?”

2.

Early the next morning a huge Jeep Wrangler Unlimited pulls under the porta cochere at the Resort. The top has been removed and the Jeep has been lifted and outfitted with big 35-inch tires. There is a Megellan Expeditions logo on the driver’s door. When the door opens, Wilder climbs down, waves and says hello to the valets, then goes inside. Wilder is 26 years old, of average height and build, and he looks tan and fit. He is wearing khaki pants with cargo pockets, hiking boots, a black Esperanza Resort tee shirt, a baseball cap, and he’s carrying a small notebook. He looks around the lobby, then goes to Shelly’s podium.

“Hey, what’s up? Where’s Almira?”

Shelly smiles, she is intrigued by Wilder and Almira’s relationship. They obviously care for one another, and they don’t go out with other people, but they don’t seem to do more than hang out, talk on the phone, and enjoy being around one another. Almira could send tour business to other companies, but she only calls Magellan. Wilder has offered to compensate her for the business she sends him but she refuses, although he has taken her as a guest, or as an interpreter, on some of the outings.

Almira is fine with their relationship. Until now being involved with someone always felt like a race to her, but with Wilder, it feels like they're just strolling along, hand in hand.

Shelly says, "She comes in later today. You want me to tell her you asked about her?"

"No, I just wondered why she wasn't at her desk."

Shelly is playful, "Okay, I'll tell her you were upset because you missed seeing her."

Then before he can answer she says, "There's your clients."

Katsu and Shima walk up to Almira's empty desk and look around. Wilder turns and hurries over to them, smiling and calling out, "Good morning, you must be Katsu and Shima, I'm Wilder, I'll be your guide today. You ready to have some fun?"

He sits in Almira's chair and takes papers from his notebook for them to sign.

3.

Katsu and Shima sit side by side as Katsu drives the ATV and follows Wilder down a rough switchback dirt road with the radio blasting out hard rock music. There are no other vehicles around, and they are exhilarated by the speed. The road is narrow with steep drop-offs on one side. They are wearing jeans, half sleeve shirts, floppy hats, and Wilder has provided them with goggles, and long scarves to partly cover their faces and protect them

from the dust that is kicked up by his ATV. Every few seconds he glances at his rearview mirror, and sees them through the dust behind him.

Katsu laughs and looks over at Shima with a maniacal gleam in his eye as he powers the ATV down the mountainside. Shima holds on and squeals with delight while yelling, “Slow down.”

Wilder’s swirling dust partly obscures just how sharp the next curve is, and Katsu’s ATV slides off the road and begins to bounce down the steep mountainside. The ATV starts off going sideways off the road, then it glances off a tree, spins around, and continues going backwards before it grinds to a halt in an almost vertical position. All the while, Katsu and Shima scream like it’s the end of the world when actually the ATV only travels about twenty yards before it stops; to them it seemed like a mile. Katsu has a red scratch across his left cheek where a limb hit him, other than that they are fine.

Wilder looks in his rearview mirror and doesn’t see them. He slams on brakes and slides to a stop, sideways in the road. He looks and listens for a few seconds then heads back. He soon comes to where their tracks leave the road, he stops, walks over, and looks down. He sees them sitting there, frozen in their seats, wide-eyed, and in shock staring up at the sky. He calls down to them.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes, get us out of here.”

“Okay, stay where you are, don’t move. I’ll go get the Jeep it’s got a wench on it that’ll pull you up. Don’t worry, I’ll be right back.”

As Wilder pulls away, he can hear Shima yelling in Japanese at Katsu.

A few minutes later, Wilder turns the Jeep so it is facing the edge of the road, he gets out, takes the hook from the wench on the front bumper, presses the remote control, and the wench begins to slowly play out the cable.

He leans against the hook and follows the path of destruction they made going down the mountain. He wraps the hook around the front axle of the ATV, presses a button on the remote, and the cable begins to pull the ATV back up the mountain. The Jeep digs in a little bit. Wilder stands on the front bumper of the ATV, holds the cable with one hand, and rides the ATV back up the mountainside.

Back on the road, the ATV is pulled up near the front of the Jeep, Katsu and Shima stand beside the Jeep arguing in Japanese. Wilder can’t understand their words, but he can tell what they are saying by their gestures. They are very angry, and very animated.

Wilder works on the ATV and watches them. Shima slaps Katsu’s arm and scolds him, he throws his hands up and turns away, they go back and forth.

Wilder goes to the back of the Jeep, opens a cooler, and gets two cans of beer in one hand and two cans of Coke in the other hand. He goes to Shima and Katsu and offers them the choice; they each grab a beer.

While they drink in angry silence, Wilder works on the ATV. When he gets it started, he smiles, looks at them, and points a thumb up.

Shima, "You couldn't pay me to get back on that thing."

Katsu, "Me too."

Wilder, "Okay, okay, no problem. But let me get a picture of you standing beside it."

They reluctantly walk over and stand beside the ATV. Wilder snaps a picture then shows Katsu how he wants him to pose with his foot up on the side of the ATV. He takes more pictures. They finish their beers. Wilder has Shima sit in the driver's seat holding onto the steering wheel as if she is driving. He takes a picture, then he has Katsu hold her scarf out behind her as if the wind is blowing it back. Katsu can't be seen in the picture and it looks as if she is speeding down the road. She pulls the goggles down over her eyes and grins at the camera. Wilder gives them another beer. They look at the pictures, laugh and pose some more. Wilder takes pictures of Katsu behind the wheel of the Jeep trying to look tough while Shima laughs at him.

4.

Just down the coast from the Esperanza Resort is an old motel with an open-air bar in the back, on the beach. The building is sea foam green and there is a sign by the highway that reads, Surfside Motel, in blue neon letters. Locals and Esperanza employees and guests frequent the bar at night when breezes from the Spice Islands intoxicate the air, and bamboo and sea shells, a juke box and a ships wheel, rum and Tiki torches, and all manner of Island Music combine to create an atmosphere of magical marine wonder.

There are about twenty people at the bar, some are seated at tables, a few are reclining on lounge chairs, one long-haired surfer is dancing by himself, and a couple stand in ankle deep water with their arms around each other's shoulders watching the sun set.

Almira sits on a bar stool with her back to the bar, and Wilder stands beside her leaning back with his elbows on the bar. She looks prim, her back is perfectly straight which results in her being the same height as Wilder. She is wearing white shorts, sandals, a Tommy Bahama shirt, and she has a small gold cross on a chain around her neck.

Wilder is wearing his usual cargo pocket pants, and tee shirt but he's traded his boots for sandals, and has left his hat in the Jeep. Shelly is sitting at a table with Donny, her special friend, who sometimes works for Wilder. Donny is a local Dude who always knows the best places to surf, sail, fish and do anything that involves water.

Later that night, Katsu and Shima stroll in, hand in hand, looking kind of dreamy. They see Wilder and Almira, and they come over and stand beside them. Katsu projects a new confidence, he still has a mark on his cheek where the limb hit him, he fist bumps Wilder, and they start to talk like old friends.

Shima looks from Wilder to Almira, then whispers to Almira in Japanese, “Is he your boyfriend?”

Almira balances her hand back and forth.

Shima continues in Japanese, “He would be a catch.”

Almira replies in Japanese, “Yes.”

Shima pats Almira’s hand, “Good luck.”

Then she and Katsu go back and sit at a table near Shelly and Donny.

Almira turns back to Wilder, “How did their trip go today?”

Wilder laughs, “Oh, I’m sure it was a memorable experience.”

The sun sets, the Tiki torches flicker, the surf continues to surge against the shore, while Almira and Wilder talk, laugh, and sometimes just be there.

After a few seconds of silence, Wilder says, “I just decided what my latest favorite thing is.”

“What’s that?”

“Standing here and talking to you.”

She responds as if she just saw a cute puppy, “Ahhh.”

He puts his empty beer bottle on the bar, and says, “However, as you know I have to meet a German couple at 7 AM at the resort and take them rock climbing, so...”

He takes her hand in his, kisses her palm, then closes her hand, and says, “See you tomorrow, Sweetie.”

He turns and walks out. She watches him leave, then opens her hand, and presses her lips to her palm.

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