

Out There

3 questions for **Julie Atlas Muz** Part-time mermaid



1 You swim around in the big fish tank at the Coral Room, often in a mermaid's costume, sometimes topless. What was the first day on the job like?

When I first got in the tank, it was like, Oh my gosh, I'm so disoriented—I don't know which er is what and I'm floating and I can't get down to the bottom. The tank is pretty complicated...but became acclimated to it, and then the first day was pretty exciting. I was like, Ooh, I'm a mermaid! I've gotten a lot better; I'm not so afraid of touching the bottom. Now I'm really able to play a lot more, which is exciting. The fish were pretty scared of me at that point, but now they're accustomed to me too. Sometimes they come right up to me, especially when I feed them from a martini glass. Now that I've fed them, we're like best friends. I'm in there twice an hour for anywhere between three and seven minutes, depending on what goes right and what goes wrong, and how I feel the crowd is responding to me. I wear goggles and a nose plug. With the goggles, I can see about two rows from the bar. I can see if the bar is full or empty. I can see people waving at me. I can see people smile. It's like being a fish.

2 What sea creature do you relate to most?
I think I most relate to mermaids. I have three mermaid tails that I've made that I [wear in the tank], and I swim a lot with my arms, so I don't use my legs to kick. In fact, it's better that you don't, so that you don't displace the gravel and the dust. But I would also like to emulate a sea horse, because I think they're freaking fantastic and I'm trying to make a "birth of Aphrodite" costume, but it's pretty complex.

3 What have been some of the reactions of the bar clientele?

People love it. I've been walking around with a fishnet collecting tips. This one guy was like, "you flash us you'll make more money." [Laughs] No one's asked me to marry them yet. One guy wanted me to put my ass to the glass. So people get a little lewd late at night, but who cares? The ladies love it, and I love making the ladies dreamy. The guys for the most part love it. It's semi-naked lady underwater, but I've found more often than not the ladies get caught up in the dream. I really appreciate that.—Stacey Szewcz