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MY GIRL

Jordana Spiro learns how to live with — and how to love — the opposite sex on *My Boys*. By Sona Charaipotra

On her long-running TBS sitcom, *My Boys*, Jordana Spiro plays a sportswriter who can really hang with the boys. And surprisingly, she says it's life with three sisters that prepared her for the gig. "The Spiro girls would much rather go on a camping trip than go shopping, drink mimosas and talk about feelings," Spiro says with a laugh. "So I learned a lot about what it's like to be chill and easygoing with boys from my lovely sisters. We're not big shoppers, and we're not big talkers."

This season, after four years of playing the field, Spiro's tomboyish character, P.J., finally scores a serious relationship. Once the initial butterflies pass, P.J. has to learn how to deal when things in a relationship get a little ho-hum. "We get to see what happens when *Guitar Hero* gets introduced into the relationship," she jokes. "But we'll also deal with a lot of real issues, like what happens when the woman makes more money than the guy. It's not the 1950s or anything, but that's still something we're working through today."

Spiro says she can relate to the dating drama. "Dating is hard no matter who or where you are," she says. "That's what I love about the show — it's always relevant. Whatever P.J.'s experiencing, I've gone through it, or I have a friend who just did."

But Spiro's got more than enough on her plate to stay busy, between *My Boys*, which recently premiered its fifth season, and studying for her

MFA in directing at Columbia University.

"I've always loved storytelling, and I really wanted to see if I liked being behind the camera," she explains. "So I started dabbling in photography and I made a few shorts before I decided to commit to it. It's a slow go for me because I have to keep taking time off to shoot the show."

Luckily, she found a strong mentor in *My Boys* creator Betsy Thomas. Thomas has allowed Spiro to shadow her in every phase of production, from scouting locations to editing, an opportunity Spiro is hugely thankful for. "What's interesting about it is that Betsy is like P.J., in a way," Spiro says. "She was a comedy writer — and that's a completely male-centric world, even today — just like sportswriting. But there's always been the idea that women can't be funny, and I think that's changing. Somebody like, for instance, Tina Fey is tearing that idea right down."

In any case, Spiro can certainly hold her own with the boys — even if she likes playing the girly girl sometimes too. Spiro admits that in real life, she's somewhere in between. "Am I one of the boys? I guess I'm a little bit of both. I'm not prissy by any stretch of the imagination, but I'm not throwing peanuts at the TV at a sports bar either. I can't prattle off sports facts," she says. But everyone, she says, can identify with feeling out of place or out of balance. And in the end, that's what *My Boys* is really about. "Everybody — male, female, tomboy or not — knows what it feels like to try to fit in and to balance work and love and friendship. To want to be ambitious but also have time for your friendships, the important things in life. That's what makes P.J. so relatable."

