

Bomb Girls blasting gender roles

Anne Brodie
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In 1995, Oscar nominee Meg Tilly left Hollywood to write, and raise her family, including a son with Colin Firth.

She's back in a passion project, *Bomb Girls*, set in an Ajax, Ont., munitions factory during the Second World War.

Tilly relishes her role as Lorna, whose abusive husband returned from the war paralyzed and who supervises the girls on the factory line.

Tilly sat down with Metro to talk about *Bomb Girls* and gender issues that are still relevant in 2012.

"I have my little chickadees to look after on *Bomb Girls*," says Tilly.

"Everyone's younger than me and there's all this female power. It's very sweet.

"I feel so privileged to work in this environment. How often can you walk back in a chunk of time and explore it and life in it and love it?"

"There is also such good will for this show. It was a brave choice to do such an unlikely look at the Second World War. The women had their jobs and husbands overseas but they were fighting behind the lines to protect their men and their children at home. They were soldiers."

Lorna is nurturing yet stern in this dangerous place, where one spark from a ring or hairpin could blow it sky high.

I wanted that, "Whoa, she's tough!" But why is she tough? If someone makes a decision you don't agree with you have to understand the whys. It's her job to keep the factory safe.

She doesn't want some dilettante coming here who could kill them all. I love the humanness of the characters, more noble than they realize.

One of her charges is Gladys, a headstrong Rosedale debutante played by Jodi Balfour. Gladys works in the office but dreams of joining the line, even as her father demands that she quit and marry. Balfour says the series reflects social realities that still exist.

These issues never become irrelevant. We may have come a long way in gender issues since the war and the overt discrimination, but those things still exist.

We have the resources to do something about them. Gender stereotypes discriminating against women can be dealt with; there are channels you can process these things through now.

But it doesn't mean attitudes have changed.

Balfour says the series inspired nostalgia for a time she never knew.

Entirely, but I've been like that all my life. I've always felt I was born into the wrong era. I relate so much to this way of being, the chivalry of it all.

It wasn't an easy time to be a woman and I am nostalgic for it. I feel I missed out on the best time to be alive.

And being wartime, they sucked the marrow out of every day.

• ***Bomb Girls*, starring Meg Tilly and Jodi Balfour, starts Wednesday night on Global.**



HANDOUT

Meg Tilly, shown in blue, says the reason she left acting was to give her children a chance to have a normal childhood.