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THE LONELY WOMAN'S GUIDE
to getting back in the game

**IS HUGH
JACKMAN
THE NICEST
HUNK ON
EARTH?**
You decide, p. 242

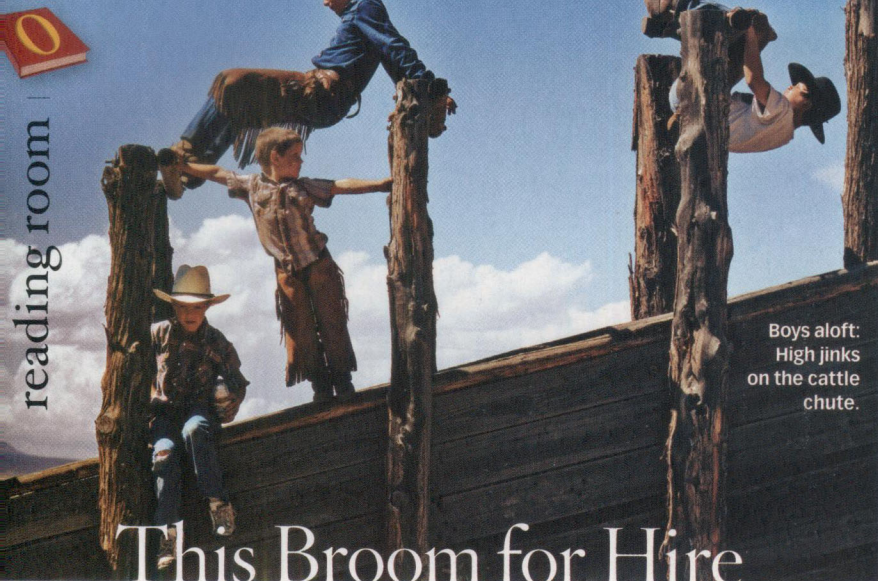
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JUNE 2006



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Boys aloft:
High jinks
on the cattle
chute.

This Broom for Hire

A mail-order housekeeper stirs things up—and sets them right—in this rollicking Western.

The *Whistling Season* (Harcourt), Ivan Doig's 11th book, is a large, charming coming-of-age tale set under the boundless skies of Montana in the early days of the 20th century. A bereaved family of four—a rancher and hauler with three sons whose wife has passed away—hires a vibrant and unlikely housekeeper through an ad in the paper. She arrives on the train from Minnesota resplendently decked out and with a highly educated and slightly rakish brother in tow. The narrator of the book is Paul, the eldest and most studious of the three frontier brothers: He looks back from adulthood to

his early adolescence and the psychological changes that the family underwent at the hands of this exotic pair. Doig is in the best sense an old-fashioned novelist: You feel as if you're in the hands of an absolute expert at story-making, a hard-hewn frontier version of Walter Scott or early Dickens. The landscape and characters are vivid, the prose flawless, and like the earlier masters, Doig imbues each scene and his spacious story with deep emotional understanding and a sense of possibility and personal adventure. *The Whistling Season* is a book that strives for more than beauty, which it achieves: It reaches for joy. —VINCE PASSARO

The Love of a Good Horse

Unlike me, *Lay Me Down* seemed to feel no rancor. In spite of everything, she was open and trusting of people, qualities I decidedly lacked. It was her capacity to engage that drew me to her, that made me aware of what was possible for me if I had her capacity to...to what? Forgive? Forget? Live in the moment? What exactly was it that enabled an abused animal, for lack of a better word, to love again?

—FROM *CHOSEN BY A HORSE*, BY SUSAN RICHARDS, OUT IN JUNE FROM SOHO

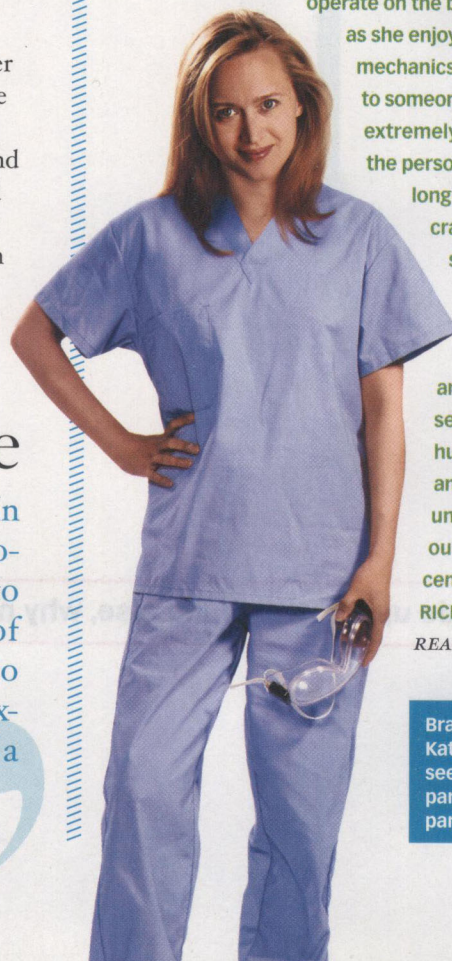
Hey, It Is Brain Surgery

A woman neurosurgeon's brisk, funny, incisive memoir.

If, like me, you spend way too much of your life glued to TV shows such as *House* and *Grey's Anatomy*, you'll be riveted by Katrina Firlik's first book, *Another Day in the Frontal Lobe: A Brain Surgeon Exposes Life on the Inside* (Random House). As Firlik delivers a behind-the-scenes look at the making of a neurosurgeon, from internship to full-fledged practitioner, it's clear that stamina, nerves, tidiness, and a bit of cowboy in the soul are all requirements. Firlik is a 37-year-old rarity (only around 6 percent of neurosurgeons in the United States are female) who, thankfully, found time in her sleep-deprived life to record in detail some of her more bizarre cases (a construction worker with a nail in his brain, for example) and to think about more abstract problems like memory loss or autism. Not only is Firlik a breezy and engaging writer, she has urgent things to say about the nature of modern medicine and the ethical issues raised in any decision to

operate on the brain. As much as she enjoys the sheer mechanics of taking a drill to someone's skull, she's extremely honest about the personal cost of her long days (sometimes crawling into bed smelling of "bone dust"). Firlik is a compelling guide to this arcane world, seeing the black humor in the OR and the glory in understanding our own command center. —ELAINA RICHARDSON

READING ROOM > 192



Brain surgeon Katrina Firlik, MD, sees herself as part mechanic, part scientist.