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OTTOMINI
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Because there's a whole dance happening"—he snapped his fingers—"right afterward, the whole stage filled with dancers, and you couldn't have a donkey standing there in the middle of it."

Diego returned to his stable. For that evening's performance, Martins gave the part of the donkey to Henry Clark, the nine-year-old boy whose job was to lead the donkey onto the stage.

"I said, 'Henry, let's see your biceps. Can you lift the cart?' He said, 'Sure, man.'"

Martins recalled that, in 1976, when he danced in the première of "Union Jack," his son, Nilas, led out the donkey.

"My son, who is now . . ."

"Forty-seven," Mehler said.

"Forty-seven. He was the original donkey boy. Balanchine said to me, 'I need a little boy who can take out the donkey, stand, do nothing while they dance, and then, at the right moment, walk off. Do you think he can do it?' I said, 'Fine.' My son was petrified. I have pictures. He's now forty-seven, and Giorgio is dead."

After Diego's failure, the stables, which had no other donkeys, sent Mehler head shots of two ponies, called Spanky and Hot-Diggity. Mehler and Martins chose Spanky, for being smaller and rounder.

And now Martins had the opportunity to watch Spanky onstage. A pianist played. Jenifer Ringer and Andrew Veyette, principal dancers, danced a music-hall kind of dance. Spanky was led on, with the girls; and then, at the right time, he was led off.

"Exactly right!" Martins said afterward. "Spanky's in. Everything's beautiful at the ballet. He got the part."

He added, "Truthfully, I would have been happy with Henry alone—the little boy—bringing the sisters on. And then we don't have to go through the god-damn nonsense."

"On the other hand," Mehler said.

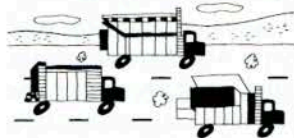
"On the other hand, this was Balanchine's wish," Martins said. "So I thought, How can I make that decision? He wanted a donkey." He paused. "He got a horse."

When, three days later, Spanky appeared for the first time in front of a ballet audience, he stopped in the middle of the stage just long enough to let his passengers alight, and to perform an act as-

sociated with donkeys and ponies equally. He left the stage in a hurry; there was an unscheduled curtain drop, a public announcement—"Ladies and gentlemen, please let us take a minute to clean up our act"—and Hot-Diggity waited for a phone call.

—Ian Parker

SECOND ACT DEPT. FIXER-UPPER



Sharon and Lawrence Tarantino bought their first and only house in 1988, in Millstone, just north of Princeton, New Jersey. It came with a leaky roof but a famous name attached to the blueprints—Frank Lloyd Wright—and the Tarantinos, who own an architectural studio, were smitten. They lined the living room with buckets until the roof got fixed, and imagined living there forever. "It's hard for me to talk about this," Lawrence said last month. He was giving a tour of the house, which he was now in the process of dismantling. If all went as planned, the house would soon be loaded onto three tractor-trailers and driven through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and on to St. Louis, where it would head south, through the Ozarks, toward its new home: Bentonville, Arkansas. The Tarantinos would not be going with it, however, and Lawrence's voice cracked when he mentioned the recently removed dining-room table. "There's no crying in architecture," Sharon said, scolding her husband. "That's what we say."

The Tarantinos, now in their sixties, had little desire to move, let alone move their entire house, but nature had forced their hand. The house sits a hundred yards from the Millstone River, which offered a bucolic view when Wright designed the building, in 1954, but had since become a menace. "Hurricane Floyd was a little below that shelf," Lawrence said, pointing to a ledge six feet above the kitchen floor. "Irene was above the shelf." In their back yard, the Tarantinos had marked the level of each flood on several trees with red spray paint, like parents tracking the height of their children.

Fearing what the next storm might bring, the Tarantinos started looking for a buyer willing to move the house to safer ground. A modernist housing development in the Hamptons showed interest, as did an Italian architect, who considered moving the house to a town north of Florence where Wright had once fled with his mistress. Eventually, Sharon learned that Alice Walton, the Walmart heiress, who had recently opened Crystal Bridges, an art museum in Bentonville, had grown up in a house designed by Fay Jones, a Wright acolyte. Walton came to New Jersey for a tour and, in January, agreed to buy the house and make it a permanent exhibit on the museum's grounds.

By early February, the Tarantinos' living room was filled with the dispersed contents of several toolboxes, multiple sawhorses, and a roll of protective plastic wrap the size of a hay bale. The first-floor bathroom no longer had a door; instead, a sign near the doorway read, "No lookie, occupato."

The house was to be taken apart and put back together with the assistance of a booklet the Tarantinos were writing, which showed where each piece should be placed, as if the house were a Lego set. Sharon was dressed in her profession's uniform—rimless glasses, head-to-toe black. Lawrence wore jeans and work boots, having embraced the role of lead dismantler. "The first stage is the skin of the interior," he said, pointing to the Philippine-mahogany boards with which Wright had covered the walls. To remove the boards, he had fitted a saw with a thin blade to slice the nails attaching them to the wall; some required a crowbar. "If you pry too much, it could crack," he said, pointing to a board that had split in one corner. "It's very tedious work."

Next on the punch list: scaffolding to remove the high ceiling, which is lined with twenty-foot beams, and a temporary staircase large enough so that the bathtub could be conveyed downstairs. A concrete tower at the house's center would not be making the trip, but that meant finding a company in Arkansas capable of reproducing Wright's preferred blend of concrete. "The windows are going to be the most difficult," Lawrence said, of the ten-by-four-foot panes facing the river. One corner, consisting of three pieces put together in a zigzag

pattern, had proved especially vexing. "There's some kind of hard epoxy in there," Lawrence said. "We don't know how we're going to do that yet."

The trucks were to arrive in a matter of weeks, and, as inspiration in the face of such hurdles, the Tarantinos had hung a black-and-white photograph of the architect just off the living room. "He's watching over us," Sharon said. They had started to find consolation for the loss of their home in their role as preservationists. "We meet here every morning," Lawrence said. "We have our cappuccino, and then he tells us what to do next."

—Reeves Wiedeman

DEPT. OF HOOPLA A WOMAN'S TALE



It is seventy-two miles as the crow flies from Lackawaxen, Pennsylvania (six hundred and forty-two residences), to the Diamond Horseshoe night club, on Forty-sixth Street, beneath the Paramount Hotel (five hundred and ninety-seven rooms). The other day, the filmmaker So Yong Kim, who lives in Lackawaxen, rode the train in, by way of Bard College, where she teaches, to attend a party

hosted by Miu Miu, Prada's little-sister label. Kim was to be the guest of honor.

Billy Rose, the showman and lyricist ("It's Only a Paper Moon"), opened the Diamond Horseshoe in 1938. Shortly thereafter, the *Times* called the club "the most zestful, gorgeous and lovable pleasure palace in town." Clark Gable, Gary Cooper, and Orson Welles were patrons; Gene Kelly contributed choreography for six-foot-plus chorus girls, who were billed as the Long-Stemmed American Beauties. The club closed in 1951; three years ago, the developer Aby Rosen bought the Paramount, and, since December, the Diamond Horseshoe has been the site of "Queen of the Night," an immersive dinner-theatre experience, with one-on-one knife-throwing demonstrations, suckling pigs on spits, and arty overhead acrobatics.

A few hours before the Miu Miu party began, Kim, a diminutive woman of forty-five, sat wedged into one of the club's velvet-upholstered booths. She had made "Spark and Light," an eleven-minute short film that was to premiere at the party, for the Miu Miu Women's Tales film series—"distinctive female filmmakers with different intellectual backgrounds explore the feminine love affair with Miu Miu," according to the brand's Web site.

"Lackawaxen has a tiny post office next to an A.T.M. machine and Two River Junction, which acts as the rifle and fishing-gear depot," Kim said. She was

wearing a flannel shirt, a striped sweater, jeans, scuffed boots, and a wool cap over her cropped hair. "We live in a cabin on this little plot of land, on the river," she said of herself, her husband, and their two daughters. "But there's a great Montessori school. It has chickens and sheep and a weaving class. If you want to get over your addiction to shopping, come over!"

Kim said that Miu Miu had approached her because the label wanted an Asian director for the seventh Women's Tale. Kim was born in Busan, South Korea, and moved to the U.S. when she was twelve. "They sent me pictures of the collection, and there are all these prints of cats and fish and birds that just felt like fairy-tale magic," Kim said. "They reminded me of old Japanese ink blocks." Did she make off with any free clothing? "No, because it's really beautiful and precious," she said. "Sometimes, I run out of the house with food all over me, so I try to just keep it clean." If she were to get any swag, she said, "I would probably hang it on the wall."

Behind her, a man practiced juggling white rings while balancing a red umbrella on his face. Another man, with a topknot, checked on trapezes that descended from the ceiling for acrobatic displays.

Kim is known for intimate, atmospheric films. The *Times* critic A. O. Scott included her in a piece on "Neo-Neo Realism"; of her 2008 film, "Treeless Mountain," about two Korean sisters left in the care of an alcoholic aunt, he noted "the accessibility of the story, the vividness of the emotions." In "For Ellen" (2012), Paul Dano plays a heavy-metal dude fighting for custody of his daughter.

At around nine, guests began to arrive, making their way down a curved marble staircase, past a chandelier that appeared to have crash-landed, pausing to pose with a stuffed jaguar draped in jewels, then on to a bar that looked like a mad scientist's laboratory. Without introduction, the lights dimmed, and "Spark and Light" played: A young woman's car breaks down. The woman, played by Riley Keough, Elvis Presley's granddaughter, falls asleep waiting for a tow, and dreams that she has sought shelter in a strange house, full of warmth and Miu Miu chinoiserie-inspired patterns. There her mother, who in the real world is ailing, is well again. "I always



"And that's when he realized he wasn't on the partner track at all!"