

**HOUSE OF EARTH PLUS:
A STORY OF ENDURANCE AND HOPE**

Chapter 1.

Once upon a time there was a young couple that wanted to live in Tokyo. They didn't have much money, but they wanted something special. An apartment was out of the question, they wanted a house and some outside space to hang about.

After a long time looking for an affordable plot, they finally decided to buy a small piece of land in Nerima—ku. It was quite convenient because from there it was easy to get to Shinjuku, where both worked in the movie business.

They had heard of an architect their age that was fighting to change the way people lived their houses. "House is Art", he claimed. They liked that. "Life is Art", they thought, so *House* should be part of it. They called him.

Chapter 2.

In their initial meeting, the young couple felt a bit disappointed at first. They had expected an unconventional type, like those revolutionaries that proliferated in Tokyo at the time. Instead, they had in front of them a very serious young man, tie, glasses and all.

But when he started talking all their prejudices disappeared, and felt immediately fascinated by his ideas. "I am not interested in sentimental expressions floating on the surface of emotions", he told them. He was after emotion *itself*. That sounded great.

After few months they got a call from the young architect. He showed them a very humble model of a house. It was like a hut, and very, very small. But when he lifted the roof it showed a wonderful symphony of colors and shapes.

The floor was *doma*, beaten earth; there was a small kitchen and a bathroom; and even a small studio to write scripts and concentrate. "Where is the bedroom?" the young couple asked, a bit shyly. "You can sleep anywhere, on the big square sofa in the center, on the platform above the bathroom. Or, if you wish, underneath the garden."

They hadn't expected that, it took them by surprise. They were quite unconventional, and even had had experiences with friends that lived in communes and practiced free love. But an underground bedroom? Really? They hadn't anticipated to sleep in a womb, a windowless space isolated from the world.

"Sometimes I have the impulse to create a space which is deeply involved with the irrational parts of man's heart", he told them. "Houses cannot exist independently of man's insatiable desires", he added sensing their uneasiness. "Besides, this way you'll have more free space in the lot." But this last argument



Location

sounded like the excuse it really was.

What made them love the project unconditionally was the color scheme of the interior. The ceiling painted black joined the red wall, which in turn met the red carpet, which in turn led to the underground bedroom, with its black walls. It was beautiful beyond reasoning, and very stimulating. They easily imagined living there and being happy, and they accepted the architect's design.

Chapter 3.

And happy they were indeed. They quickly adapted to the unusual scheme, they tried sleeping in different places around the house, up above and down under. They loved the furniture, even if it could not be removed, and filled the house with African masks and all sorts of memories of their trips, matching the exotic woods and patterns of table and chairs.

They especially liked the big bed-sofa that served as meeting place, loving place, sleeping place. It reminded them of a central prop in *Yūkoku*, a controversial movie by Yukio Mishima that was banned in Japan but that they could see in Paris. It certainly was a pity that they had to remove it when they grew older and less agile.

Now, after 50 years, they still live in their house. Their house is their life, as the young architect had predicted. Exciting as it has always been, now their life has an unexpected turn of events, and they have to face a new challenge.

Their favorite grand-niece, Noriko, is coming to live in Japan from Brazil, where she was born. She's only 22 but has accomplished a lot in the film industry as well. She is a much-demanded makeup artist in productions around the world. Her experiments with colors and textures make the best directors want to work with her.

Noriko is a very open and unconventional person, she likes the bright colors of Brazil and the sensuousness of the country where she was born. But she loves the culture and memories that her family have preserved from Japan. She is from both places, and traveling a lot she is basically from the world.

The once-young couple would like to live the rest of their years in her company, because they know that she can enliven their lives. And she would love to live with them, share their memories, take care of them as they took care of her at the beginning of her career. They need to add a room to the house.

The young architect passed away some years ago, so they can't turn to him for advice. They think another young architect is needed to provide a solution that is not disruptive of the original house and that can add a contemporary, uncompromising flavor to their home. They need good ideas, and a great project.

Can you help them?



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