

Academy of Language Studies  
UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang

# e-Lingua

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*Connecting Cultures  
One Word at a Time*

你好

Apa Khabar?

Bonjour

Hello

مرحبًا

Hallo

こんにちは

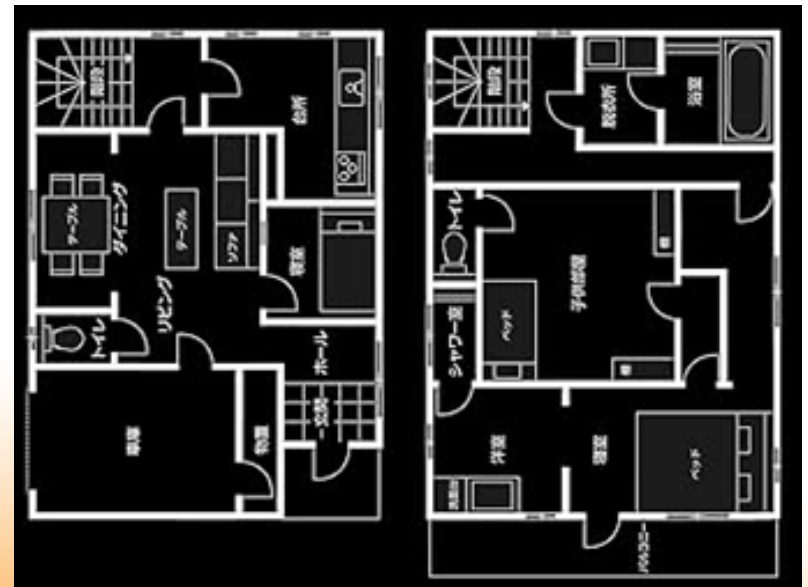
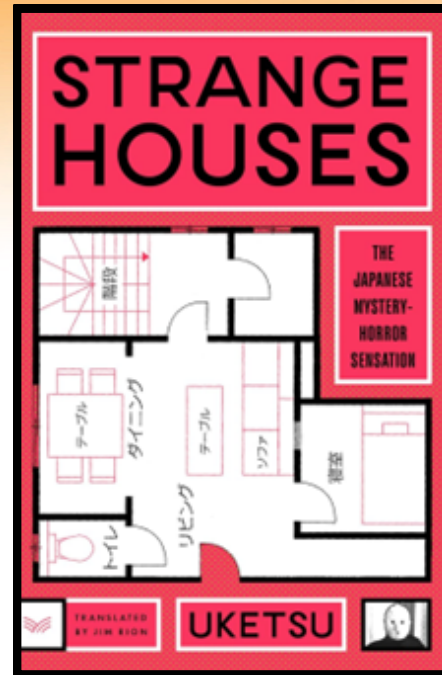


# A Review of Strange Houses by Uketsu

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I was scrolling through my X timeline and accidentally came across a tweet posting about a newly famous novel written originally in the Japanese language but later being translated into English. I have never come across the title and the author's name in my life. Well, yes, I know a few famous Japanese authors like Haruki Murakami and Osamu Dazai, but I have never read a book written by Uketsu. So, I went straight to search for the author's collection of novels, and I realised that he had written a few novels of the same theme: anomaly or peculiarity in houses, pictures, and buildings. Following the tweet, it also mentioned how the novel was an easy read and could be finished in one sitting. The tweet also stated that this novel was quite straightforward, but it still gave you a lingering feeling of uneasiness after finishing reading it. Well, now, he piques my interest. I have not been reading novels for quite some time now, and I think now is a good time to at least read one or two novels while I have the time to do so.

I fetched my iPad and quickly googled for the ebook version of Strange Houses on Google Play Books, checked out the book, and started reading the piece. Well, as the tweet said, it was an easy read, and I managed to finish the novel in two hours or maybe less than that. Although it was an easy flip-through, I was left wondering how someone could get the idea to write a novel about blueprints of houses. The simple blueprints of houses that might seem ordinary, nothing peculiar, but once you take a closer look at them, you sense something quirky about the spaces in the houses: why are there empty hallways that lead to nowhere, or why does the area have two doors? These simple wonders led the author to write a novel about the oddity found in the blueprints of houses.



The novel starts with an unnamed narrator, a columnist who focuses on macabre stories, as he picks up on people's personal unpleasant experiences to write about. One of the strangest stories came to him. His friend, who is trying to sign a lease for a house, came by with a floor plan of the potential house. Initially, the floor plan seemed normal, nothing to worry about. But after a closer look, his friend found a strange detail in the house's floor plan. The house was spacious and all, but that one detail bothers him. The mysterious dead space on the first floor of the house seemed off. The narrator went to his other friend, Kukiwara, a draughtsman who is an expert in architectural spaces. Kukiwara went about the floor plan, and he put both floor plans on top of each other. Now, there's another concern that arises, rather than just a dead space on the first floor. The dead space intersects with a small area inside the bedroom on the second floor.



Then, another blow: when you look closer at the floor plan of the second floor, the bedroom layout is so bad that it gives me chills. The house was originally built by a couple with one child, so there should be at least two bedrooms. But looking at the layout, the children's room was inside the master bedroom. And to get to the child's room, one must pass through the parents' room first. Seems odd, right? Why would someone make that kind of layout? The centre of the second floor revolves around the children's room, as if no one should even see the children, which is very peculiar. This layout left me wondering a bit about the secret of the previous owner of the house.

The novel actually consists of more than one odd case of house floor plans across Japan. I really enjoyed my time reading this novel; it gave me another perspective on life, and now I am more particular in reading things like floor plans, and I really asked for my house floor plan from my parents to see if there are any anomalies inside our own house. To end, I think the writer did a pretty solid job on writing the novel, as well as Rion, the translator, who managed to translate the novel perfectly.

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