

The Hollow

Arit, a young architect, arrives at Madam Oni's house for a renovation assignment. The house strikes her as unattractive, with its chaotic roofs and peeling pink walls. Greeted by Lucky, a teenage gatekeeper, she learns Madam Oni is absent but proceeds to measure the property. The compound feels oppressive, with overgrown gardens and looming fences. As a junior at her firm, Arit is tasked with the groundwork, her mind already analyzing the space despite her limited role. She reflects on her uncle's teachings about the essence of a house—questions of beauty, function, and client needs—as she steps inside.

The house's interior is cool and eerily silent, with no visible air conditioning. Arit meticulously sketches the layout, but the design confounds her; rooms and corridors lack logical flow. The décor feels dated, with faded carpets, stucco walls, and vintage curtains. The absence of personal touches—no photos or art—adds to the house's unsettling emptiness. As she moves through the space, her measurements become disjointed, mirroring the house's resistance to coherence. The kitchen, with its stark marble counters, offers no respite, and the backyard's wild growth contrasts sharply with the sterile interior.

Madam Oni suddenly appears, demanding Arit's opinion on the house. Arit admits her confusion, and Madam Oni's tone shifts from irritation to desperation, asking if the house can be "fixed." Arit deflects, explaining her role is limited to measurements, not design solutions. Madam Oni's weariness is palpable, and Arit senses an unspoken history haunting the space. The chapter intersperses Arit's present task with fragmented glimpses of another woman's traumatic past, hinting at a connection between the house's dysfunction and hidden suffering.

Arit's reflections return to her uncle's lessons, emphasizing that a house is more than physical structure—it carries the weight of its inhabitants' lives. The chapter closes

with unresolved tension, as Arit grapples with the house's enigmatic nature and Madam Oni's unspoken anguish. The narrative suggests that the hollow feeling Arit senses stems from untold stories, leaving the reader to ponder the deeper meaning of home and the scars it may conceal.

