

Tokyo Shift: Locking Japan into the *Fast and Furious* Franchise

For Randy

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At some point in the early 2010s, a husband-and-wife team of Tokyo-based Japanese scientists developed a deadly weapon known as Aries (or the Aries Project). Aries “was designed to override and assimilate anything that runs on code. Any computer anywhere. If it operates on zeros and ones, it’s vulnerable. If you take Aries and upload it to a satellite, it’ll spread like a virus. Then it’ll be a matter of time before someone can control any weapon system ... traditional, nuclear, stuff we haven’t even seen yet.”¹ Attempting to make the weapon as secure as possible, the scientists created a control “key” reliant on DNA recognition. In this way only they, and their young daughter Elle, could activate Aries. Oh, and if this were not sufficiently improbable, Aries was a private project, with the weapon kept in the scientists’ suburban home, where it was unknown to the Japanese Government, but became known to certain shady elements of American intelligence.

Such is the premise of *F9*, or *Fast & Furious 9* (2021)—known in Japan as *Wild Speed: Jet Break*²—directed by the well-known Taiwanese-American director Justin Lin, the latest installment in the extraordinarily successful *Fast and Furious* franchise. Aries is clearly a “MacGuffin,” the term Alfred Hitchcock popularized: an object, pursued by various people, that can focus a plot; but relatively unimportant and easily substituted itself.

Hitchcock judged his own “best MacGuffin”—the microfilm of undisclosed “government secrets” in *North by Northwest*—as the one that was “the emptiest, the most nonexistent, and the most absurd” (qtd. in MacGilligan 558): criteria that could be used to justify Aries. We never find out whether Aries would actually work. We never find out what ultimately happens to it. We never find out for what ends it was developed in the first place, by seemingly nice individuals. All that really matters is that good people need to stop bad people obtaining it.

Why Japan? The answer has nothing to do with real world probabilities, for Aries is primarily a belated attempt to integrate all the *Fast and Furious* films into a (more) coherent whole. The third and most disconnected installment in the franchise was *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift* (2006), known in Japan as *Wild Speed X3: Tokyo Drift*. As fans know well, that earlier film interrupts the main chronology of the series, representing events which actually occur after the main action of *Fast & Furious 6* (2013).³ Directed by Lin, and with a screenplay by Chris Morgan, it proved the least successful entry in the franchise, and seemingly represented a narrative dead end. It was partly filmed in Tokyo, and features a few minutes of reasonably atmospheric cinematography, but its engagement with anything like a credible Japan is minimal to the point of indifference. Sean Boswell, played by Lucas Black, is a troubled American high school student who loves racing cars; he is sent to live with his father, a United States Navy officer inhabiting (for unexplained reasons) a tiny house in central Tokyo. Typical of the film’s approach to Japanese things is the representation of Sean’s first day at “Wadakura High School” (a name presumably inspired by Kazutoshi Wadakura, who worked on the film as a line producer and made a cameo appearance as a fisherman). All we see of this is that he has

to take a mathematics class he cannot possibly follow and that the first student who speaks to him is an African American boy named Twinkie, played by the American actor and rapper Shad Gregory Moss (better known by his stage name Bow Wow), who owns a car. That same day, through Twinkie, Sean is introduced to an “underground” world of illegal car racing where hundreds of young women turn out to see young men compete, and where everyone necessary for the plot speaks fluent English. And that same day, in his very first race, Sean gets to compete against Takashi, the “Drift King,” the nephew of a local *yakuza* boss. The fact that Takashi, the film’s principal antagonist, is played by Brian Tee (Jae-Beom Takata), an American actor, is again revealing of the film’s general inauthenticity. Any non-Japanese student who has started a new life in a Japanese high school would presumably see all this as the most unlikely fantasy. Paradoxically, *Tokyo Drift* selects Japan as an exotic, non-American place, then works hard to make it as much like the *Fast and Furious* version of America as possible. Despite the inauthenticity, and the minimal use of Japanese actors, it is worth noting that *Tokyo Drift* was successful in Japan, where it grossed some \$8,331,839, the Tokyo setting clearly giving it a boost⁴—only in the United States, Britain and Germany did the film earn more (*Box Office Mojo*).

At the very end of *Tokyo Drift*, Vin Diesel made a cameo appearance as Dominic Toretto, a central character in the initial film in the series, *The Fast and the Furious* (2001). This heralded his return to the franchise, every subsequent installment of which has concerned the adventures of Toretto and his associates. However, *Tokyo Drift*’s tenuous link to the later films relies much more on the character of Han Lue, an American presumably of Korean descent (he is played by Sung Kang). Han mentors Sean into the

ways of the Tokyo underworld, but towards the end of the film is seemingly killed in a car crash. Han proved a charismatic character and was brought into *Fast & Furious* (2009), *Fast Five* (2011) and *Fast & Furious 6* as the franchise really took off, turning into a commercial juggernaut. At the end of the third of these films, his apparent death was shown again, in a very brief return to Tokyo, and this time reexplained as deliberate murder by a new character, Deckard Shaw, played by Jason Statham. This still left *Tokyo Drift* very much the outlier in the series, its Japanese setting wholly explained by the fact that Sean, who would not appear again until *Furious 7* (2015)—and then only very briefly—happened to have a father living in Tokyo. A significant part of the artistic brief for *F9*, with a screenplay by Daniel Casey and Lin, was clearly to find ways to integrate the earlier film, and Japan, more satisfactorily into the larger narrative of Dominic Toretto and his associates. It is possible the plotline was designed, in part, to please the franchise's large Japanese fanbase, and there is some evidence that in this respect it was successful. But the larger goal was obviously to please the massive global audience the franchise has accumulated, and here there was notable disappointment.⁵

F9 returns a second time to the scene of Han's death. The biggest surprise the film offers is that what had seemed to be a fatal car crash in *Tokyo Drift* and a murder in *Fast & Furious 6* was in fact neither, for Han is still alive. His supposed death was staged by "Mr. Nobody," played by Kurt Russell, a shadowy special intelligence figure introduced into the franchise in *Furious 7*. This movement from accident to precisely executed murder to elaborately planned "disappearance" says much about the steadily escalating improbabilities of the franchise as a whole. Mr. Nobody, we now learn, wanted Han to disappear as he had undercover work for him in Tokyo, and

this is where Aries enters the picture. Han was specially chosen to steal Aries! This is one of many occasions in the *Fast and Furious* franchise where the viewer has to suspend copious amounts of disbelief, as stealing Aries seems to involve little more than going into its creators' home and taking it. Why couldn't Mr. Nobody or some experienced intelligence operative do this themselves? But it soon becomes clear that the whole MacGuffin of Aries was inspired by the desire to bring Han back into the series, partly as a result of pressure from fans.⁶ If Han's "death" in Japan was to be revealed, after all, as an elaborate deception, then the writers needed some very potent reason for him to disappear in Tokyo, and this led to the Aries plotline. To justify one startling improbability a whole new set of startling improbabilities was conjured up.

Fast and Furious plots have been increasingly driven by extreme levels of coincidence, so we are not surprised to learn that on the very night the supposedly dead Han went to steal Aries, certain rogue agents made their own attempt to obtain it. On that rainy Saturday evening, Aries' inventors were going out with their 11-year-old daughter Elle. Elle forgot her raincoat and went back to get it: an action that saved her life, as her parents were blown up as soon as they started their car. The car bomb makes no more sense than any other part of the Aries plot, for if the rogue agents were planning to enter the house to get Aries, it was extremely unwise of them first to alert the neighborhood that something untoward was happening (though neither here, nor at any other point, do the Japanese police make an appearance). But the sudden death of the scientists creates the scenario that Casey and Lin want: a young girl is now uniquely capable of activating the weapon. Han had presciently entered the house to retrieve Aries just before the explosion; immediately after it, the rogue operators entered. Realizing

that Elle is now likely to be in extreme danger, Han killed the rogue operators and took her into hiding with him. The Japanese authorities, it is implied (simply by the issue being ignored), believe Elle to have died with her parents.

The Aries MacGuffin, then, delivers three desired outcomes: it allows the popular Han to return to the series, locks *Tokyo Drift* more firmly into the *Fast and Furious* saga, and positions a young girl as the only “key” to a uniquely deadly weapon. Additional benefits are the convenient facts that the adult Elle can be introduced into *F9* as a fluent English speaker, and the private nature of Aries means no Japanese response to its theft is treated (no Japanese authority figure appears in the movie). Elle, the first significant Japanese character in *Fast and Furious* since Takashi in *Tokyo Drift*, is played by the Japanese-New Zealander actress Anna Sawai. We learn that she was effectively adopted by Han, who not only made sure she spoke excellent English, but had her instructed in all sorts of fighting techniques. Sawai herself was born in New Zealand in 1992 but moved to Japan in 2002 and is fluent in both English and Japanese. Elle’s martial prowess draws on the stereotype of the young Asian female with deadly fighting skills that has become increasingly common in Hollywood in recent decades (Madsen). Sawai had already embodied the stereotype in her first (and only earlier) film role, *Ninja Assassin* (2009).

F9 is the franchise’s most substantial return to Japan since *Tokyo Drift* by a long way. Toretto and his team learn that Han—still believed dead—has something to do with Aries, though they are not initially aware that Aries was developed in Japan. Puzzled by this, Letty, Toretto’s wife, played by Michelle Rodriguez, and Mia, his sister, played by Jordana Brewster, set off to Tokyo to try and find out more, thus putting the Japanese plot in motion.

The general mood of the Japanese scenes is very different from those in *Tokyo Drift*. The earlier film is an exuberant fantasy of Japan that a young American man, with limited cultural interests, might have. It is all fast cars, available women, English-speakers everywhere and the thrills of a criminal scene largely left to police itself. One piece of dialogue succinctly captures the fantasy element. Han and Sean are speeding through Tokyo at night, and two astonished policemen register their speed as 197 km/hr, but do nothing. Han explains that if you are driving at over 180 km/hr, the police won't give chase, as their patrol cars are not fast enough. "I'm beginning to like this country already," says a grinning Sean. There is nothing akin to this in *F9*, and no references to an illegal car racing scene in Tokyo. Letty and Mia are happily married women and are in Japan simply to find out more about an old friend they believe dead. The dramatic stakes are also much higher, in keeping with the general aggrandizement of the series from *Fast Five* onwards. In *Tokyo Drift*, the worst that can happen is death in a car crash or assassination by a member of the *yakuza*. In *F9*, by contrast, a deadly weapon developed in Japan could reset the whole world order.

In the theatrical release of *F9*, Tokyo is introduced at approximately 50 minutes into the movie with a brief melody on a bamboo flute evoking a stereotypical East Asian sound world. Neither this nor any other scene was actually filmed in Tokyo; instead, production designer Jan Roelfs designed an appropriate set at Leavesden Studios in England (*F9 Production Information* 25). Letty and Mia are walking along a small, old-fashioned street after dark, in an area of ramen shops and sake bars perhaps loosely inspired by the Asakusa district. Letty declares that they have reached a "dead end," so they order two bowls of ramen and sit at an outside table to eat. As she orders the ramen, we see bottles of Nomo Nomo sake prominently

displayed, the only obvious product placement in the Japanese scenes. The noodles are barely touched, for the two women promptly fall into one of the “deep,” meaning-of-life type conversations that regularly punctuate this series of action films. An emotional climax is reached when Mia declares “Dom is my brother, but you’ll always be my sister” (a statement the scriptwriters seem to have understood as meaning “you are my sister-in-law by virtue of being married to my brother, but even if that were not the case, I would always regard you as my sister”). A moment later Letty glances up at a window across the street and notices a large Mexican flag hanging in it. An illuminated sign next to it announces an *izakaya*, though the majority of viewers would not be able to identify this. Remembering that Han had described Japan as his version of Mexico, a place for outlaws to find refuge, Letty immediately concludes, correctly, that he has placed the flag there as a clue to his whereabouts. The noodles are abandoned completely, and the two women set off to try and find out more. At the end of the scene an unidentified figure is seen watching them.

At this point, there is a remarkably long pause in the Tokyo action. An abrupt scene shift takes us to Germany where, most unexpectedly, Sean, Twinkie and Earl, three characters from *Tokyo Drift*, make their first appearance as they are about to test a rocket-powered Pontiac Fiero. They are treated as minor, comic characters in *F9*, but the narrative movement here is obviously designed to remind viewers of the earlier film, which is thus immediately locked more firmly into the larger *Fast and Furious* narrative. The German scene is then followed by a much longer, much more consequential scene in London, where Dominic Toretto comes face to face with his long-estranged brother Jakob, played by John Cena. Only after this, and over 12 minutes since we last saw Letty and Mia, does the film cut back

to where the action was suspended in Tokyo.

The two women now ascend the stairs to what had seemed to be an *izakaya* but now turns out to be a sparsely-furnished, dimly-lit, old-fashioned apartment that they can enter without difficulty.⁷ The kitchen, we learn, faces the street and Han has hung the Mexican flag across the kitchen window. In the apartment, Letty and Mia find a framed photograph of Han with a young girl—our first glimpse of Elle. A moment later Elle herself appears dressed in tight black leather, looking more like a character from a comic book than a typical young Japanese woman, thus supplying an immediate hint of her martial skills. Interestingly, in interview Sawai has said: “When you first meet Elle in the film, she’s trying to stay strong, but is very scared because everything is changing around her and everyone is looking for her” (*F9 Production Information* 20). It’s actually not clear that *anyone* is looking for her at this point, and the viewer, in any case, is given no time to register such psychological complexities. Elle immediately shouts “Mia! Letty! Down!,” at which point a number of armed Caucasian men storm the apartment. This sets up an extended “girl power” action sequence in which the three women resourcefully take on the attackers, beating them up and incapacitating them in various ways. The fight concludes as Letty leaps onto one of the assailants so that they both crash through a window before conveniently landing on the pile of traditional sake barrels, wrapped in straw and roped, that could be glimpsed in the very first shot of Mia and Letty in Tokyo. (At this point the attentive viewer realizes that Han’s apartment must stretch between two, roughly parallel streets.) The barrels bear the label Hakutsuru Sake in roman characters: a second Japanese brand name, but so easy to miss that it seems unlikely to have been deliberate product placement. A second wave of attackers is shot dead by a marksman from a

nearby building. The marksman is revealed as Han and the scene ends with Mia and Letty seemingly recognizing him. The revelation that Han is alive is such a powerful *coup de théâtre* (albeit with the surprise element watered down by his appearing in the trailer and on promotional posters for the film) that obvious questions are suspended and never answered. What were these attackers trying to achieve? How could Elle and Han know that Letty and Mia were about to be attacked? Why did the crucial Elle have to risk her life in hand-to-hand combat when Han could have started shooting earlier, or supplied her with a firearm? How could Han know that the attackers would materialize in the street behind his apartment, where there seems to be no entrance? And so on. As so often in the *Fast and Furious* franchise, it is a matter of what Richard Wagner famously called “Wirkung ohne Ursache”—effects (or results) without causes (301).

The Director’s Cut of the film is significantly different. In this, there is no introductory flute melody and the initial shot of Mia and Letty walking through Tokyo segues into a scene of them breaking into Han’s “old [work] shop.” They find nothing there of particular interest but coincidentally do work out the likely route through which Han became connected to Mr. Nobody, that is through Gisele Yashar, a character played by Gal Gadot, who seemingly died in *Fast & Furious 6*. The film then cuts to the scene in Germany before returning to Tokyo for the scene of the two women buying ramen and spotting the Mexican flag. Some confusion in the editing process is revealed by the fact that the first Japanese scene ends with Letty saying “This place is a dead end” and the second starts with her repeating the same words. Then comes the London scene and then we are back in Tokyo for the big battle between the sexes. It is easy enough to see why the scene in the workshop was sacrificed from what is still a long film: Mia and Letty

do not need to figure out the Han–Mr. Nobody connection as Han himself will soon make that clear. Nevertheless, artistically and logically there can be no question that the Director’s Cut is superior. Splicing two Japanese scenes together in the theatrical release forced an inordinately long pause in the Tokyo action and removed the poignant sense of returning to a dusty, mysterious, broken past that the seemingly abandoned workshop had been designed to evoke. Additionally, the Director’s Cut makes it reasonably clear that the Mexican flag is displayed close to Han’s old workshop, while in the theatrical release it seems almost impossibly fortunate that Mia and Letty should be eating their ramen across the street from such an important clue. Finally, the scene contains some suggestive, self-reflexive dialogue, discussed in the conclusion to the present essay.

The attempt at a certain Japanese authenticity is mainly expressed through these scenes with Mia and Letty. When Han later tells his story—which turns on the rather tired movie logic that because Mr. Nobody trusted Gisele, and Gisele trusted Han, Mr. Nobody can trust Han like a brother—there are further flashback scenes to the events surrounding his acquisition of Aries and rescue of Elle. However, apart from a shot of Han talking to Mr. Nobody in a traditional bar, where they are apparently drinking sake, there is little in these subsequent scenes to add to the established image of Japan. That image is rather gloomy and old-fashioned, with lots of glimpses of traditional architecture and the light mainly supplied by small neon signs. There are certainly authenticating touches, such as the mass of electric cables overhead and the illuminated, outdoor vending machines that foreign visitors see as characteristic of Japan. Nevertheless, the Tokyo shown here is wildly different from that depicted in *Tokyo Drift*—William Goldman’s well-known formula “the same only different” can be reversed, as we are

confronted with something different only the same, especially in relation to the workshop (97)—and makes little sense in terms of Han’s story. Would he really choose to live in a very old-fashioned, rather shabby apartment, in a honeycomb of sliding screens, with dim lighting supplied by traditional, floor-standing lamps? And on a busy pedestrian street where his comings and goings would be seen by many Japanese, and where there could be no place for a car? It seems highly unlikely. The little ramen shops, sake bars, and above all the straw-wrapped barrels sitting in the street seem to place the whole area firmly in the past: a striking contrast to both the world of *Tokyo Drift* and the very high-tech narrative surrounding Aries. Japan is now a place of mystery and nostalgia for its Western visitors, a mood appropriate to the story, and above all to the franchise now making its first extended return to Japan in fifteen years and trying hard to tell us that what we thought we knew is all wrong. Perhaps Lin was inspired in part by memories of exploring “old” Tokyo when in Japan to direct the earlier film.

But it is the franchise nostalgia that is most important, for, as Anthony Oleszkiewicz has proposed, *F9* is ultimately “about the franchise itself.” The current critical consensus is that the *Fast and Furious* series reached its highpoint with *Furious 7* in 2015, the installment which also proved the biggest commercial success. The later films have had a higher proportion of negative reviews, key criticisms being that they are increasingly reliant on tired formulas and excessively self-conscious about their franchise commitments. *F9*, in particular, has prompted such complaints, with George Elkind, one of the most perceptive reviewers, suggesting that:

With the screenplay contorting itself into grotesque shapes to be sure viewers are strongly encouraged to revisit old installments [of

the franchise] while nearly forbidding them to accept that people, characters, or actors can leave or die as happens in real-life families . . . , *F9* seems to be constantly working to resuscitate itself *as a franchise* when it could simply live, breathe, and drive ahead—as a film. This unwillingness to simply *proceed*, probably in the name of building groundwork for upcoming spinoffs, hampers Lin’s more generally competent direction of action and dims the work of a rich stable of performers, making it tough to enjoy what should be a pretty simple story to nail.

This is just right, and succinctly explains the narrative drag of the Japanese plotline. Even a brief consideration of the overall *F9* story will quickly suggest that Han’s theft of Aries is remarkably irrelevant. All that matters in the here and now of the action is that Mr. Nobody has *lost* Aries, and Team Toretto have the challenge of getting it back. If Aries had been developed by bad actors in America, a leaner, more logical plotline—“a pretty simple story to nail”—would have emerged more or less effortlessly. There would still have been a central MacGuffin, but a MacGuffin immediately ready to drive a present tense story rather than one also needing to be woven into incredible past events, now unraveled for the first time.

As things stand, the quaint old Tokyo of ramen shops and sake barrels meticulously assembled in the Leavesden Studios seems to represent most of all a paradoxical longing for an authentic depth and wholeness in a franchise both obsessed with, and yet embarrassed by, its own past. If *Tokyo Drift* had appeared superficial, especially in the light of its successors, *F9* effectively admits to that (seeming) superficiality while at the same time using smoke and mirrors to make it disappear. This is registered in a suggestive piece

of dialogue included in the Tokyo scene cut from the theatrical version of the film, the scene most obviously designed to evoke a sort of franchise nostalgia. Several reviewers commented on what Oleszkiewicz calls *F9*'s "nearly fourth-wall-breaking commentary," moments in which characters seem at least half-aware that they exist, not in anything like the real world, but in a film franchise. This is one such moment, though one that has not, to the best of my knowledge, been considered from this point of view. As Mia and Letty explore Han's old workshop, Mia expresses the thought that "it doesn't make any sense": Han seems to have been involved with something massively consequential in Tokyo, and yet "police records make it sound like he was running around with a bunch of small-time crooks." (These are Japanese police records, presumably; it is never explained how Mia gained access to them.) Letty giggles and replies: "Don't mock it. That's how we started." This is something of a non sequitur, for Mia is clearly not mocking Han's seemingly "small-time" criminal past, just commenting on a puzzling inconsistency. But in my interpretation, this is "nearly fourth-wall-breaking commentary," for Han "running around with a bunch of small-time crooks" succinctly evokes the world of *Tokyo Drift* into which Sean Boswell fell, and Letty's "Don't mock it" warning makes sense best if understood as pointed not at Mia but at the *Fast and Furious* fan disappointed by the "small-time" criminal horizons of the earlier film. In other words, Mia and Letty's challenge to reconcile two very different ideas of Han in Tokyo is also the challenge the viewer faces.

Letty's defensive "That's how we started" explicitly points the audience back to the originating film in the franchise, *The Fast and the Furious*, but it is deliberately confusing. The emotional argument seems to be something like "we started as small-time crooks, so if Han too emerged from that kind

of world, he's all the more one of us." The larger, franchise-promoting subtext is that *The Fast and the Furious* and *Tokyo Drift*—and one could add *2 Fast 2 Furious* (2003)—are about the “small-time” origins of characters who will go on to be franchise regulars, become immensely wealthy, and save the world. That works very well as a defense of the limited scope of the earlier films. However, the smoke and mirrors are evident as soon as we remember that the chronology of the franchise installments is different from the chronology of the stories they tell. Han, as far as we know, did not start his “career” in “small-time” criminal circles, and certainly not in Japan, but is supposed to have become involved in that arena after the far more momentous events of *Fast & Furious*, *Fast Five* and *Fast & Furious 6*. But there is at least a hint here, I suggest, of the pragmatic response to the *Tokyo Drift* problem that Lin wants viewers to adopt: one that might be compared to the famous rabbit-duck illusion. That is, to both see *Tokyo Drift* as the third film in the series, and as such above all an introduction to the young Han and how he “started,” and *also* the sixth film in the series, showing what Han did after Gisele's death, as he was about to be drawn into working for Mr. Nobody. Obviously this asks for plenty of goodwill on the viewer's part, and that goodwill, it seems safe to conclude, is indispensable if *Tokyo Drift*, and with it Japan, are ever to feel truly locked into the *Fast and Furious* franchise. Otherwise the feeling that “it doesn't make any sense” is likely to go on haunting the whole Han-in-Tokyo plotline.

Notes

- 1 Ramsey's summary, as given in the film. Dialogue from the *Fast and Furious* films is transcribed directly from the DVD releases.
- 2 All the *Fast and Furious* films have been given alternative titles in Japan (Hibberd). The original *The Fast and the Furious* (2001) was renamed *Wild Speed* and every subsequent film in the series has a title that starts with *Wild Speed*.
- 3 Han Lue is seemingly killed in Tokyo towards the end of *Tokyo Drift*; that moment is then returned to in a mid-credits scene at the end of *Fast & Furious 6*. If the two stories are to be understood as unified, then the mid-credits scene in the later film must be understood as occurring some time after the main action of *Fast & Furious 6*.
- 4 *2 Fast 2 Furious* (2003), the previous film in the series, grossed \$6,523,011 in Japan despite performing better than its successor in most other markets (*Box Office Mojo*).
- 5 At the time of writing (October 2022), *F9* has grossed \$33,257,802 in Japan, \$173,005,945 in the United States, and \$726,229,501 worldwide. *The Fate of the Furious* (2017), the previous film in the series, grossed \$35,613,959 in Japan, \$226,008,385 in the United States, and \$1,236,005,118 worldwide. Thus it would seem that *F9* has managed to retain the Japanese audience, while losing a significant part of the worldwide audience. All figures from *Box Office Mojo*.
- 6 The *LA Times* film reporter Jen Yamato had started a popular #JusticeForHan social media campaign after 2017's *The Fate of the Furious* (Perry).
- 7 The *izakaya* sign is a mystery which is never explained. Is there an *izakaya* in the building as well as the apartment? Has Han put the sign there to disguise the fact it is an apartment?

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