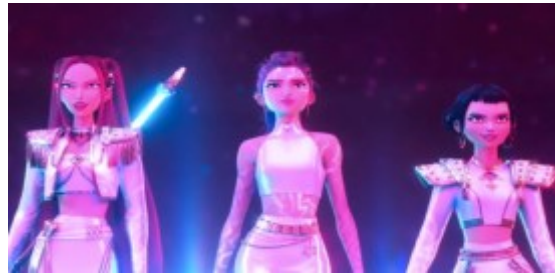


# Shame & Guilt Do Not Define Us

If you have kids in your life, you've probably watched K-Pop Demon Hunter. If you haven't, it's worth watching because at its core is a powerful message: shame and guilt do not define us, and that idea relates to forgiving ourselves.

In the movie's world, demons prey on humans, feeding their souls to the evil Gwi-Ma. In each generation, a girl-group combats demons and creates a barrier called Honmoon. Their ethos, "We are Hunters. Voices strong. Slaying demons with our song. Fix the world and make it right. When darkness finally meets the light." This generation's trio is Huntr/x with Rumi, Mira, and Zoey trained by Celine, a former hunter. Celine also raises Rumi, the orphaned daughter of her groupmate and a demon and instructs Rumi to hide the demon parts of her, even from Mira and Zoey. Celine believes that once Honmoon is perfected, demon patterns on her skin will disappear. But no matter how hard Rumi fights the demons, the marks keep spreading. They are an outward reflection of her shame, denial, secrets, and lies. Everyone grapples with expectations set by family, society, and eventually internalized. When we fail to live up to expectations, we experience shame or the feeling *I am wrong*. Shame takes many forms—for Rumi, it's inherited or how she was born. For Zoey, it's being "too much and not enough." For Mira, it is being her family's "problem child."

Centuries ago, a boy named Jinu chose fame and fortune and left his family to starve. Over time, his guilt—the feeling *I did something wrong*—turned to deep shame and eventually consumed him, condemning him to the demon world. In exchange for Gwi-Ma erasing his memories (source of his guilt and shame), Jinu agrees to destroy Honmoon by stealing the Huntr/x fans with a K-Pop boyband. While learning of Rumi's patterns, Jinu comes to accept her but believes her plan to seal Honmoon and free him is hopeless. Rumi replies, "That's the funny thing about hope. Nobody else gets to decide if you feel it. That choice belongs to you."



Still from *K-Pop Demon Hunters*, 2025. Sony Animation.

Jinu betrays Rumi triggering her complete

transformation into a demon. Rumi confronts Celine who confesses, "Everything I was taught told me you were wrong, but I made a promise, so I did my best to accept you and help you." Celine believes to protect Honmoon, faults and fears must remain hidden. To her,

community and love are only possible through perfection—or at least the appearance of it. Her acceptance of Rumi was conditional, only partial: she embraced Rumi's good qualities but rejected innate parts she viewed as wrong. This conditional love became Rumi's shame making her feel unworthy to be herself.

Rumi refuses to let shame define her. Like hope, shame is yours to accept or reject. Refusing to hide anymore, Rumi sings stronger than ever and faces Gwi-Ma: "Now I'm seeing all the beauty in the broken glass. The scars are part of me, darkness and harmony. My voice without the lies..." As Gwi-Ma begins to overpower Huntr/x, Jinu performs his first selfless act: he sacrifices himself by stepping into Gwi-Ma's torrent of hatred. John 3:19 states, "Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." Jinu's deed inverted this verse; he chose light—not because he was perfect, but because he realized that he did not have to continue to define himself by guilt. In choosing light, he helped defeat Gwi-Ma.

The message is clear: when we reject God's forgiveness and continue living in guilt for what we've done or shame for who we are—we remain in darkness. We condemn ourselves. Or we can choose light, hope, love, and doing good. Rumi doesn't deny her brokenness or pretend to be flawless. Instead, she embraces her scars as something that connects her to others. Wholeness isn't being fixed. It is being seen and loved for who we are. As 1 John 4:12 says: "...if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."

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