

Honestly, the fact that I have to specify...

A conversation between Kaname Madoka and Akemi Homura. Takes place as an alternative to [the one they have in episode 4 of the anime](#).

As the sun fades, Madoka and Homura walk together—or, rather, not quite together:

Madoka walks several steps behind, shyly clutching her bag with both hands as she struggles to find any words to say, her brain still reeling from yesterday's events and Mami's still-empty apartment.

As Homura leads, her expression doesn't waver from its typical blankness. With no effort on her part to spark conversation, the walk is quiet, save the occasional noises of the cars that pass.

Eventually, they reach a tall wedge-shaped building, its gothic exterior stretching far along both roads, presenting a sole entrance with high wooden doors facing the corner of the intersection. The area is calm, far from the Mitakihara City's more bustling neighborhoods. The two girls enter the building, their footsteps echoing as they navigate the empty halls dotted with evenly spaced columns of light. Homura suddenly stops, causing Madoka to nearly run into her, as she begins to unlock a door. Madoka glances at the nameplate: Akemi Homura. "Come in," she says bluntly, holding the door open.

"O-Okay," Madoka manages to squeak out, tentatively taking the door in her own hands, glancing curiously at Homura's strange apartment. While her own is comfortably furnished, decorated with pictures of her and her younger brother, Homura's is quite the opposite. Its blindly sterile white walls and floor enclose a large but mostly hollow space. A small table sits at the center of a raised platform in the shape of a gear that mirrors the intricate mechanical scythe-like pendulum above, swinging as the arm of the clock laid out by small bench-like furniture on the

floor. One wall displays a collage of frames, suspended as if by magic as they drift slowly from side to side. Some are paintings; others seem to be pages from old manuscripts, but they are neither homely nor easily readable at a distance.

The two girls take seats opposite each other, the silent pendulum marking the time as Homura watches Madoka. "I'm sorry, Homura-chan," Madoka eventually says. "I should have listened to you. Now, Mami-san..." she trails off, the rest of her sentence catching in her throat.

Homura cocks her head slightly as she answers. "The circumstances would have been different, but the outcome would have been the same." She pauses, making sure that Madoka hears the full weight of her words. "Such is the fate of a magical girl." Tears form in Madoka's eyes, and Homura looks away. Her words are softer but still deadly serious when she says, "I am glad that I was able to change yours."

Silence falls upon them again for a while until Madoka speaks again, her words tentatively breaching the air. "You seem like a really experienced magical girl, like..." she falters. "Like Mami-san. But... different?"

Her response is almost flippant. "Perhaps. I won't deny it." But she soon turns away again, her eyes glazing over slightly.

Noticing this, Madoka asks, her tone gentle, "Do you have many skeletons in your closet?"

"Do you mean literally or figuratively?"

"Uh..." The question catches her off-guard. At first, it seems like a joke, the kind of thing that Sayaka might say before breaking out in laughter. But Homura doesn't laugh or even smile. Nor does she elaborate. She simply stares. It's a genuine question. Madoka lowers her gaze, scratching her head in the awkward silence. "Honestly, the fact that I have to specify..."

Despite Madoka's pause in answering, Homura takes one as well, her hollow gaze staring through her to the opposite wall. "So many I've lost count. Tomoe Mami is just the most recent." She sighs, focusing her gaze sharply in Madoka's eyes. "This is the burden of us magical girls. In exchange for our wishes, we are cursed with the duty and the pain of battle to defend them, even in death."

Madoka gasps at these words, tears forming in her eyes. "Wh-What will happen now?"

Homura flips her hair over her shoulder. "She had no close friends or family. It will be some time before she is reported missing."

"But what if we—" Madoka is stopped by Homura's increasingly piercing gaze.

"What would you say? After all, you met Tomoe Momoe just days ago." She gets up, turning to the pictures on the wall, her back to Madoka. "Having died in a witch's labyrinth, there is no corpse for anyone to find. And since only those with magical potential can sense Kyubey and the witches, there is no hope to convince anyone of their existence."

Silent tears begin running down Madoka's face and her voice is unsteady when she speaks. "So no one will ever know what really happened to her?" She takes the ensuing silence as confirmation, which only exacerbates her crying. "That's horrible! All Mami-san wanted was to protect everyone!"

Homura closes her eyes, taking a deep breath without turning around. "Do not confuse that with having the responsibility to do so," she says slowly. "Altruism may seem noble, but it is inevitably fatal for a magical girl." She pauses, glancing over her shoulder to ensure that Madoka is listening. "If you value those close to you, then it is nothing but a futile sacrifice."

"But..." Madoka wipes the tears from her eyes, but she can't stem their flow. "Isn't it the magical girls' job to protect people from the witches? If Mami-san hadn't... then the hospital..."

Homura catches the silhouette of Kyubey out of the corner of her eye but ignores it. Turning back to Madoka, she explains with carefully chosen words. "It is as Kyubey explained to you: those whose wishes are granted are given the responsibility of fighting the witches—no more, no less." A pause as Kyubey's silhouette scuttles along the wall, Homura's eyes following. "Thus, there is nothing but our wishes to fight for. That is the simple nature of the contract that defines the power we hold." A hint of sadness briefly flashes across Homura's otherwise emotionless expression, and it betrays itself slightly in her voice. "If and when our deaths go unnoticed and we are but fading memories in this world, well... That, too, is the simple nature of the contract."

Madoka's head is in her hands, but she shakes it adamantly as she lets out a muffled sound of disapproval. "I'll remember her." She takes a deep breath to compose herself slightly, without too much success. "I'll remember her. And I know Sayaka-chan will too. And what about you, Homura-chan?"

She lets out a sound closer to a scoff than she'd prefer, and her voice is just as hollow. She can't bring her gaze to meet Madoka's. "What about me?"

Madoka pauses at the question but catching Homura's implication, she redoubles her assertion, her voice strong but gentle despite her still-wet eyes. "I couldn't forget you either, Homura-chan. Not after you saved us yesterday." She smiles. "I also don't think you'd forget Mami-san."

Homura returns her gaze to the wall, seemingly reading the manuscript pages displayed there. It's a long time before she responds, and when she does, her voice lacks its normal

authoritative presence. "Perhaps. But I, too, am a magical girl." She turns around to face Madoka once more, finding the piercing eyes of Kyubey's silhouette staring straight at her.