

## maybe my soulmate

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by [meriwethersays](#)

### Summary

There are wild stories of what other races do to find their soulmates—they say that Vulcans are scanned at birth and entered into a database for easy matching, that Klingons have superstitions around the size of a soul-mark and kill children whose soul-marks are too small, that unscrupulous doctors specialize in soul therapy that can *make two people become soulmates*.

### Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Kathryn remembers how betrayed she felt as a child when she learned that soul-marks could change and even disappear. “How can your soulmate change?” she’d asked her father. He exchanged a fond glance with her mother, which did nothing to temper her seven-year-old outrage.

“People change, Kate,” her father had said. “Life goes one way for one of you and another way for the other, and then you’re not right for each other anymore.”

“And when they disappear? Does that mean there’s no one left in the entire galaxy to be your soulmate?”

Her father shakes his head. “Sometimes people decide—not to pay attention to their mark. For all kinds of reasons. The mark can disappear then.”

Kathryn’s soul-mark is in the middle of her spine—T6, the tricorder tells her—far enough that she has to twist and look in a mirror to be able to see it. It changes three times between the time she’s seven and the time she enters Starfleet Academy. It stings a little with each change. Sometimes it’s abstract or geometric; sometimes it’s a very clear shape. The problem, she realizes quickly, is that most people’s soul-marks are somewhere a little hidden like hers. It’s extremely rare for a mark to appear on a hand or arm, rarer still for it to appear on a face or neck. There are places where people place holograms of their soul-marks, in the hope of finding their soulmate, but Kathryn and her friends scorn these as a last resort for—old people who didn’t meet their soulmate naturally.

There are wild stories of what other races do to find their soulmates—they say that Vulcans are scanned at birth and entered into a database for easy matching, that Klingons have superstitions around the size of a soul-mark and kill children whose soul-marks are too small, that unscrupulous doctors specialize in soul therapy that can *make two people become soulmates*.

*Kathryn is sensible and busy and she doesn’t credit those stories. But the whole idea of soulmates has seemed a little ridiculous to her all along, ever since her father explained them, and she doesn’t let her soul-mark guide her decision. “Huh,” Mark says when he sees hers, and she knows that they don’t match, but she loves Mark and he loves her. It’s some time after she agrees to marry him that she realizes her soul-mark has faded to nothing.*

*But the minute that Voyager appears in the Delta quadrant, she feels a searing pain on the skin that covers her T-6 vertebra. It’s only after—everything, after the Maquis are aboard Voyager and they’re fleeing the Kazon and the wreck of the array—that she realizes exactly what that pain was. She goes to the infirmary and summons the Emergency Medical Hologram, just to confirm it—but when he appears and grumbles, “State the nature of your emergency,” Kathryn feels a certain stubbornness surging through her.*

*“No emergency,” she says.*

*“Then why did you call?” The EMH frowns. “Is it of a personal nature? I am programmed to be discreet.”*

*“No,” Kathryn tells it. “Computer, end program.” She goes back to her quarters. “Mirror,” she says, and one appears. She stares into it.*

*Either her soulmate is in the Delta Quadrant or—they're going to find a way home. Does she want to know? Does she want to feel the pressure of—obedience to a force that no one can quite explain?*

*Her door chimes. "Just a minute," she calls. "Computer, remove mirror." When the mirror is gone, she says, "Come in."*

*Commander Chakotay enters. "Captain, I've been sent to bring you to the mess hall," he says, and when he smiles, she sees the dimple in his cheek.*

*She sighs. "I suppose under the circumstances, the crew would like to see us eating with them."*

*"With limited replicator rations, I'm sure they'd be comforted to know we're eating Neelix's food too." Kathryn yields and leaves her quarters with him. She must be staring, because he says, "Captain, you're welcome to ask."*

*"I apologize," she says. "I—If you're comfortable telling me, is that a tattoo or a soul-mark?"*

*Chakotay touches the lines over his eyebrow lightly. "A soul-mark. Among my people, a mark on the face or neck is common—I didn't realize it was so unusual until I went to Starfleet."*

*She's looked him up in the database. She knows about his distinguished Starfleet career, recently discarded in favor of the Maquis cause. "I had an Orion friend at the Academy whose mark was on her cheek. Her true mark." It's common—vile—practice for Orion slavers to tattoo a buyer's mark onto a woman when they sell her. "She was happy to have it so visible."*

*"It simplifies things," Chakotay says.*

*"It would be very—revealing, I would think. When it changes."*

*"I wouldn't know. Mine has never changed."*

*"What, never?" They walk into the mess hall then and it's too noisy for her to ask more. But when she goes back to her quarters, exhausted from having to be publicly optimistic, she decides that she doesn't want to know what her new mark looks like. Chakotay has a real soul-mark, the ever-fixed mark. She doesn't want to stare at her own in the mirror and see what it looks like this time—for however long the latest one lasts.*

*She's in a Jefferies tube repairing a conduit, Chakotay crouched next to her as they review crew assignments—keeping Voyager running requires multi-tasking—when some kind of caustic fluid spurts out and splashes onto her shirt. Chakotay flinches back in time, and Kathryn is already stripping off the shirt as the acid eats through it, then her undershirt too. She hears Chakotay make a kind of strangled noise—either at what's just happened, or worse, at her soul-mark.*

*Kathryn turns. "Commander, I would appreciate your jacket," she tells him. She'd rather confront him with the sight of her bra than think about what he's just seen on her back.*

*Chakotay slowly removes his uniform jacket. He looks a little dazed.*

*"Chakotay? Did it get you too?" She lifts the jacket out of his hands and puts it on.*

*"No," he says, and his voice is a little hoarse. "No. Are you all right, Captain?"*

*"No harm done." Kathryn looks at where she was sitting. The fluid has eaten through the rest of her clothing. "I'll get someone in here to clean that up," she says, and shoos him out of the Jefferies tube in front of her. He climbs out and then offers her a hand. She takes it. His grip is warm and firm and something about it is just—comforting. It feels right. When she releases his hand, she can't keep herself from patting his shoulder. "You and I should fix up our uniforms before the crew starts getting ideas." For just a second, he looks like she's punched him in the gut, but then he smiles and the expression is gone. She's never seen that dimple appear except when he smiles at her.*

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*The crews integrate...unevenly. B'Elanna, it turns out, has a shiny burn across her forearm where her soul-mark used to be, and won't say whether it's intentional. Kathryn catches Tom Paris sneaking glances at B'Elanna's forearm and thinks: that way lies trouble. Ayala and Jenny Delaney discover that their marks match, which goes a long way toward helping. The Doctor tells her that ten different crew members have reported changing soul-marks, which makes Kathryn a little less sanguine about getting home—and that's only the people who've reported it.*

*Some of the people whose marks have changed are frightened by it. Clearly, they didn't spend their youth wondering what the mark would look like the next day. Little fights break out—once when three ensigns corner Geron and try to make him reveal his soul-mark and Dalby beats one of them unconscious, once when Seska appears to match Harry Kim and then they discover that she's a traitor.*

*When she takes the bait and Chakotay confronts her, Seska sneers at him. "I thought about making my false mark match you, you know," she tells him. "You never would have questioned it, would you? Sweet Chakotay, always so trusting. I wonder, will your mark finally change out here in the Delta quadrant? Or will you have to wait seventy more years to find your match?" She disappears then, and Chakotay looks gutted.*

*Kathryn invites him to dinner the next night. She finds herself crouched in front of the replicator, fiddling with its controls—she refuses to be defeated by a machine!—when Chakotay walks in.*

*"Trouble with dinner?" His voice is mild, teasing. She likes the sound of it.*

*"The replicator is acting up." She glares at it.*

*"Ah, that explains the acrid smell." Chakotay grins at her when she turns the glare on him. "Let me?"*

*"Be my guest." She stands a little awkwardly and Chakotay puts his hand very lightly on her back to steady her. The place where he touches feels like it's fizzing, like the tiniest electricity, and she realizes it's the spot where her soul-mark lurks.*

*"Excuse me." His voice is very rough as he says it and slides between her and the replicator. The space is narrow, and she finds herself keenly aware of the firm strength of his body next to her. It takes her a minute to remember to move away, and she puts the table safely in between them as he tinkers with the replicator. "What were you making?" he asks.*

*"Vegetable biryani. My grandmother's recipe."*

*He gives her a startled smile. "We may have to settle for something a little less ambitious. Computer...tea leaf salad." Chakotay sets a bowl between the two of them and hands Kathryn a plate. When she takes it, their fingers touch, and Kathryn has to remind herself not to drop the plate.*

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*Kathryn doesn't think about her soul-mark very often. She wouldn't pursue it now, not with an entire crew depending on her, and she doesn't need a soulmate now anyway. Not when Chakotay is by her side day in and day out, the one person she can rely on even when they disagree. She finds that she likes to touch him, lets herself put a hand on his shoulder or loop her arm through his own, and he reacts in kind. When he pats her on the back in cheer or condolence, his hand unerringly finds her mark beneath her clothes, and every time, it sends a jolt up her spine. That's normal. She assumes.*

*Then they get infected, and Voyager has to leave them behind. Chakotay calls her 'Captain' and somehow it sounds wrong. "Maybe you should call me Kathryn."*

*He takes a few halting steps, laden with equipment. "Give me a few days on that one, okay?"*

*It's a strange feeling, building the shelter with him. They work in comfortable silence—she suspects that he's trying to process everything that's happened the same way that she is. When they go to bed, Kathryn takes down her bun and braids her hair back and thinks, my life as I knew it has ended.*

*Chakotay seems to be handling it much better than she is. He whistles and goes out into the woods while she sets up her research equipment; he comes back with scratches on his arms and they eat dinner and then Kathryn examines all the data she's collected and Chakotay—well, she's not quite sure what he's doing.*

*On a sunny morning, she says, "You've been spending a lot of time in the woods. Is there something I should know about?"*

*He hesitates. "Not yet." He refuses to give her even a hint beyond "I'm building something," but he smiles at her with such affection that it makes her breath catch for a moment.*

*Chakotay reveals it a week later. "I know you wanted a bathtub," he says, as she stares at it. There's an emotion in her throat, and—horribly—the pinprick of tears in her eyes as she strokes it. She can't imagine the effort it must have taken.*

*"Thank you," she says, when she can control her voice.*

*"You're welcome, Kathryn." His smile is warm. "Would you like to try it out?" For a dizzying moment, she thinks that he's suggesting—but no, of course not.*

*That night, when she's soaking and he's safely in the house, she hears a noise and calls, "Chakotay! Someone's in the woods!"*

*He runs out with a phaser and a flashlight. It's only a primate, and she creeps a little closer to it, towel sagging. "Hello," she says. Chakotay's light bobbles a little, and when she glances at him, he darts his eyes away from her naked back. Maybe her soul-mark is something grotesque-looking. After the primate darts away, there's a long moment where Chakotay is standing next to her and she can feel her skin beginning to cool off from the hot water. She wants to lean into him, but that would be—far beyond anything they've ever done. Far beyond what would be appropriate.*

*"Well," she says. "I should get dressed."*

*He flinches a little, just enough that she can see it, and then nods. "Call me if any more primates interrupt your bath," he tells her, and this time his smile looks a little pained.*

*When she comes inside, he asks her to stop. Stop the hours that she spends day after day, trying to find a cure for them. "You mean quit."*

*Chakotay lets out a frustrated breath. "Why do you have to see it as defeat? Maybe it's simply—accepting what life has dealt us. Finding the good in it." There's something pleading beneath his words, something she doesn't quite understand.*

*"There may be a day when I'll come to that," she admits. "But I'm a long way from that right now."*

*He only nods and smiles, his lips a little tighter than usual. The next day he starts a new woodworking project. "Headboards," he says, before she can ask. "I noticed you sometimes sit up in your bed to read. Figured you might as well have a comfortable backrest."*

*She struggles with how to accept these gifts he wants to give her—the bathtub, the headboard. "That's very thoughtful of you," she says finally. "You've done so many things to make our lives easier here." It makes more sense to her when she thinks about it that way. He's making two headboards, after all.*

*The storm comes up quickly, stronger than she's ever experienced, and she struggles to get home with her equipment. Chakotay finds her in the woods and wraps his arm around her, pulls her close to his side to guide her home. They take shelter inside, lying under the table as the structure rocks and objects tumble to the ground—her equipment, smashed, days of work lost. He holds her as the storm wails outside, his chest warm and solid against her back, and if he feels what might be a sob at the thought of everything lost, he doesn't comment on it.*

*The sun rises on wreckage. Things are much worse outside, her insect traps smashed and flung willy-nilly. She kneels down to pick through the rubble for anything, but—"None of this is salvageable," she says slowly. "There's no way I can continue to do my research."*

*She can feel Chakotay's gaze. "I'm sorry," he says, and he does sound it.*

*Kathryn shakes her head. "That's one way of letting go, I suppose." She feels a little numb at the thought of it.*

*Chakotay lets her be, cleans up the debris until she feels silly not helping and begins to drag branches herself. "I've been thinking," Chakotay says carefully. "There's plenty of wood here. I could probably add rooms to the shelter." It's obvious he's been thinking about it for longer than the past few hours—he has plans for a log cabin already in mind. When she tells him about the terrible camping trips of her youth, he teases, "Maybe those camping trips helped prepare you for life here."*

*"Oh no," she says, and she realizes the truth of it as the words leave her mouth. "Life here is much better."*

*His cautious smile is like the rising sun. "I think that's the first time I've heard you say anything positive about being here."*

*The primate re-appears before she has to find an answer to that. "I doubt he can be domesticated easily," Chakotay says.*

*"Well, we have plenty of time. The rest of our lives."*

*Chakotay heaves a sigh. "That's a long time." Very sincerely, he adds, "At least I hope so," and crosses his fingers, and Kathryn can't help laughing at that. She can't imagine being here with anyone but him.*

*That night, she can't help the groan of pain that escapes her as she sits. At Chakotay's inquiring look, she admits, "I'm not used to that kind of work." She massages her own shoulder and winces. "My knots are getting knots."*

*"Let me help." He sets down his brush and walks over. The moment he touches her hair, she knows this is—something different. That it will mean something different. His hands are warm and soft against her sore muscles, and she hears him talking but the words don't quite come through. One of his hands trails down her spine, just far enough to find the shape of her soul-mark, and she can't help groaning at the surge of pleasure—yes, she can admit it—that results. It takes her a long time to realize that his hands have stopped moving. She can feel the warmth of his breath against her hair.*

*Kathryn ducks out from under his hands and stands, turning to face him. The look on his face is almost unbearable—some cross between hope and resignation. She takes the coward's way out. "That's much better, thank you," she tells him. "Well—I'm going to go to bed now. I'll see you in the morning."*

*"Sleep well, Kathryn." His voice is like velvet. She wants him to ask—no.*

*"Yes—you too." She walks to her alcove and climbs into bed, the bed he built a headboard for, and stares up at the ceiling. This—whatever this is—feels unmanageable, expansive, all-consuming. She lies there with her thoughts for ten minutes, thirty, an hour—and then she gets up again.*

*Chakotay is sitting at the table, carving something into a piece of rock. He doesn't look surprised when she sits down in front of him, or when she says, "We have to talk about this."*

*He sets it aside carefully and takes a deep breath. "All right."*

*It's hard to say. "I think we need to—define some parameters. About us."*

*The resignation on his face hurts. "I'm not sure I can—define parameters." He brushes his fingers lightly over the soul-mark above his eyebrow. "I—need to know. Once. Is this all you want it to be?"*

*"All I want—?" There's a strange thought shouting from the back of Kathryn's mind, a thought she's never been willing to listen to.*

*"I've wondered," he says, and it sounds painful to admit. "Ever since I saw. Why you looked at me and—decided against me so quickly. I never would have asked you, but now—why? Is it because I'm Maquis? Is it—"*

*"Chakotay," she says, and she grips his hand almost convulsively. "I don't know what you're talking about." He stares at her like he can't understand the words she's saying. Very slowly, she reaches out her other hand and touches his cheek. He closes his eyes. She trails her fingers up, centimeter by centimeter, until she touches the edge of his soul-mark. He gasps in a breath and she gets that same surge of satisfaction—"I don't know what my soul-mark looks like," she tells him, as comprehension dawns. "I haven't looked at it since it re-appeared."*

*He blinks his eyes open, though she hasn't taken her hand from his soul-mark. "You don't know?"*

*"It—disappeared for a long time," she says. "I felt it come back when we entered the Delta quadrant, but I didn't—"*

*Chakotay exhales sharply and turns his face so that he can kiss her palm. His lips are soft against her skin. "When I saw yours the first time, I couldn't understand it," he says. "I'd never heard of someone being unwilling to even acknowledge it."*

*There are goosebumps prickling their way across her skin. "I didn't know," she repeats.*

*Chakotay stands and she follows, until there's no table between them. "Can I—?" he asks, and she nods. "You should touch mine at the same time," he says. Kathryn unbuttons her nightgown a few buttons, enough that he can slide his hand down the bare skin of her back until he's just hovering over her mark. "Now," he tells her, and Kathryn presses her hand to his mark as he touches hers.*

*A pure sense of peace washes through her—a sense of home. She can feel Chakotay, his strength of feeling and depth of belief in her, and somehow she welcomes the knowledge that he can feel the same from her. She moves forward, careful not to dislodge his hand, and kisses him. Chakotay lets out a shaky breath and pulls her tight against him as he presses his mouth to hers. She drops her hand to his shoulder to pull him closer, but the connection remains.*

*When they finally separate, they're both breathing hard. "I had no idea it would be—like that," Kathryn says. Her mind is her own, but she can feel an awareness at the back of it that tells her Chakotay is here and whole. The happiness, she can see on his face.*

*"Neither did I," Chakotay admits. "But I'm glad." He touches his forehead to hers. "I should have asked you a long time ago."*

*She laughs a little. "Maybe I should have looked at my mark." She runs her fingers along his neck and lets them dip into his open collar to feel the bare skin of his chest. He shivers. "I've heard other things about soulmates," she says, and when she lifts her eyes to meet his, Chakotay is almost beaming.*

*"You know, I have too."*

*The bed isn't really big enough, but they make do.*

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*When Voyager contacts them to say there's a cure, Kathryn thanks them in a daze and then stares at Chakotay. "We can leave."*

*She knows him well enough, now, to understand the struggle of emotions that he's feeling—happiness, duty, sorrow at the loss of their shared home. "Well," he says. "I was betting you would find a cure before Voyager did."*

*"You know I hate to disappoint, but I'm happy to have spent these weeks focused on—something else."*

*Chakotay looks very serious. "When we go back to the ship—what do you want to do?"*

*She knows what he's asking. "Take the bathtub," Kathryn says promptly. "I hope you don't have too many possessions to move into my quarters, because it might get a little crowded—"*

*"I think we'll manage." Chakotay grins at her and leans in for a kiss, and that sense of peace washes through her again.*

## End Notes

Spotify threw the song "maybe my soulmate died" into my random mix and this is the result.

An earlier version of this story had Kathryn's previous mark matching Justin Tighe, her fiancé from the Star Trek novel *Mosaic*. It didn't quite fit (and required too much explanation/reference to *Mosaic*, which is a great novel), but I still like the idea.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!