

# The Max Clan Part 2

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Part 2 of The Max Clan

Published on  
**Booksie**

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“Well, come on.” She said, staring at Katlyn.

Layla started walking for the door.

“And scrape that boy off the floor, will you?” she said and nodded towards Sean who was lying on the floor, unconscious.

Layla stared at Sean and was impressed with her punch’s result. She didn’t know she had what it takes to knock someone out. Katlyn bent over and took hold of Sean’s left wrist. She turned around and dragged him over to Layla who was watching with awe. Layla shrugged and turned to the door. She opened it and was smacked in the face with malodorous air again. She stepped out onto the porch and screamed as Gamma grabbed her by the arm and yanked her away from the front door. Katlyn dropped Sean and lunged at Layla’s other arm. Gamma was too fast and grabbed Layla into a chokehold and out of Katlyn’s reach. She fell forward and landed on the front lawn. Sean was starting to awaken when Katlyn hit the ground. As his vision cleared, he noticed the situation around him. When he realized what was happening, all color drained from his face. His cheeks were no longer flushed. His lip color even got a shade lighter. He stared at Layla as the back of her head was pressed against Gamma’s chest and his arm was around her neck. She tried to struggle and lashed out. Her legs were flailing and she was grasping on to Gamma’s wrist, trying to break his hold. Gamma whistled and a guard jumped out of a black van that was parked near the entrance of the farm. He ran to the house, shackles in hand. Gamma handed Layla off to the guard. She tried to run during the trade but was yanked back by the shirt collar.

The guard continued the choke hold and dragged Layla to his van. He pulled his arm away and threw her in. Before Layla could react, the guard shut the car door. She pulled the door handle. She jiggled it and twisted but the door wouldn’t budge. The guard hopped into the passenger seat and settled down. Layla leaned forward and found a radio control on the back of the guard’s seat. She turned a dial and the volume of the radio greatly increased. The guard spun around.

“Turn that junk off or you’re finished!” he roared.

Layla quickly spun the dial and the volume of that radio was muted. The guard grunted. After a few minutes of waiting, Gamma approached the van. Layla wasn’t surprised to see Sean in a choke hold and being hauled into the back seat, next to her. Layla looked at him. There was a scar on his chin where Layla’s knuckles had slammed into his jaw. There was also a light black and blue ring around his right eye. Layla immediately knew that he’d resisted arrest and had been hit. She raised her hand to her cheek. It didn’t sting anymore but it still left a red area that looked like a fresh rug-burn. When Layla and Sean made eye contact, she was unsurprisingly the first to turn away. Gamma got comfortable in his car seat and buckled his seat belt. Layla looked out the van window. Katlyn was limping over to the car, shouting. Her face was bright red and there was a waterfall of sweat sliding down her forehead. Layla looked away from Katlyn to Sean. He was still staring at her. His eyes seemed to burn right through her. Layla looked away again. She couldn’t turn to Katlyn or Sean so she kept her eyes straight ahead at the seat in front.

“You can’t ignore me forever, Walker. Not forever.” Sean said to Layla who still wouldn’t look at him.

A threat. Sean threatened Layla. Now she knew she’d gone too far. She expected him to lie for her so he did. She expected him to help her so he did. She’d gone out of line and punched him. She’d taken away

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all his strength at the moment. If she hadn't been so paranoid, he'd be strong enough to succeed in his plan to resist arrest. If it weren't for Layla, he'd be free. Now he'd threatened her. He'd turned on her.

### Chapter 6

#### Cellmates

Sean and Layla sat down on their beds. Sean was on the top bunk and Layla was on the bottom.

"I can't believe I'm in jail with an outsider." Sean said while staring at a blood stain on the ceiling.

"Look, I'm sorry. I didn't mean for any of this to happen." Layla yelled up at him.

"You do this all the time, don't you?"

"Do what?"

"Drag people into your problems so they have no choice but to help you?"

"Just cut it out! I didn't mean for this to happen!"

Sean jumped off the side of the top bunk and landed perfectly on his feet beside Layla's bed. She flinched and crawled to the back of the wall that the bed was pressed against.

"It's your fault that I'm in here with you!" Sean shouted.

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Layla sprang off the bed and in front of Sean. She pointed a finger straight at his face.

“Take that back.” She said through clenched teeth.

“If you put that finger near my face again, I’ll break it in two.” Sean said while pushing her hand away.

Layla grabbed Sean by the shirt. He pushed her off and threw her onto the floor. Sean dove at Layla but she stuck up her leg and kicked him over her. She rolled backwards and got to her feet. She drew her leg back, ready to strike Sean in the face. She swung her foot at him but he reached up and caught it centimeters away from smashing his head. Sean yanked on Layla’s foot and she fell to the floor. He stood up. Quickly gaining strength, she stood as well, greeted with a punch in the jaw. She hit the far wall. Sean ran and got ready to punch again but she shoved him away. He almost tripped on his own feet. Layla closed in on him and managed to kick him straight in the chest. Sean toppled to the ground and looked up at Layla. There was a small blood stain on his shirt where he’d been kicked. With the stain, the black eye, and the scar on his chin, Sean looked destroyed and battered. Layla turned and walked to her bunk. Sean stayed on the floor and didn’t move at all. From the bed, Layla couldn’t see his face. For a second, she thought he might be dead. That idea vanished from her mind as soon as it appeared. But then it came back. Sean was making it look like she’d attempted to murder him so she’d be sentenced to more time in prison. That idea vanished too. Layla felt she was being paranoid and that Sean only stayed on the floor because he was tired. He finally looked at her again. She stared back at him. She looked deep into his blue eyes. He stared into her brown eyes. His blonde hair was messy and damp. Her brown hair was frizzy and felt hot around her neck. Everything in the cell was quiet except for the distant sound of execution and sorrow. Sean sat up.

“Not bad, Walker. Not bad.” He said when he finally caught his breath.

He stood and walked over to Layla’s bunk. He stuck out his hand at her and waited for a shake. Layla looked at him angrily. Sean drew his hand back.

“I guess this isn’t the best time to be friends again. No use trying the on, off, on, off thing.” He said and sighed, “Well, goodnight.”

Sean grabbed onto the ladder leading to his bunk. When he was up, he stared at the blood on the ceiling. *Now how did that get up there?*, he thought to himself.

**Sean+Layla=Sayla**

**Cellmates**

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It was the middle of the night in the prison. All of the prisoners were fast asleep and new guards had come in to fill the night shift. Layla was motionless but Sean was tossing and turning in his blankets. He couldn't sleep at all. The thought of being in prison haunted his dreams. The only good thing was that he was with Layla. She was The One and she'd help him once they were friends again.

“Layla! Are you awake?” he whispered.

“I am now.” Layla whispered back.

“I've been thinking and I'm sorry.”

“It's ok. I'm sorry too.”

“It's ok.”

Sean sighed.

“I'm sorry I tried to kill you.” He said.

Layla chuckled.

“I'm sorry that I almost killed *you*.” She replied.

Sean laid down across his bed on his stomach and hung his head off the edge so he could see Layla.

“You look awful in low light.” He told her.

She took her pillow and covered her face with it. Sean reached out and poked the pillow. Layla slapped his hand away. Sean tried again and yanked the pillow off of Layla's head. She scowled at him. She then reached beside her bed to grab her hair brush and portable reading light from a night stand. Layla switched on the light and brushed her hair. She stroked her hair and the bristles slipped through. Sean watched Layla in amazement. The more she stroked her hair, the more beautiful she became. Sean lifted his head and sat right up on his bed. He turned and inched down the ladder to Layla's bed. When he was down, Layla was finished brushing her hair. Now she looked better.

“Now you look lovely.” Sean told her while sitting on her bed.

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Layla smiled. Sean thought she had the most ravishing smile in the world. He smiled back and held her hand in his. Their fingers laced together. They looked into each other's eyes and inched closer between each blink. They leaned in closer and closer until their lips touched. Layla wrapped an arm around Sean's neck and the other kept holding his hand. Sean wrapped his free arm around Layla's waist. The kiss was gentle and soft. It felt right, like Sean and Layla were meant for each other. It felt like they'd be together forever and that even long after they were gone, their love would never die. Soon, they pulled away slowly. Sean turned and slid off the bed. He reached for a bar on the bunk ladder, positioned his feet, and kicked off the floor. He stayed there on the ladder and looked lovingly at Layla. She returned the favor.

â Good night, Layla.â

â Good night, Sean.â

**Cellmates**

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### Queen Clarabelle

Layla awoke to feel someone tapping her on the arm. She rolled over and opened her eyes all the way. Sean was standing beside her bed. When he saw that she was awake, he bent over and gave her a quick kiss. He then wandered over to the far side of the cell to mark an "x" on a calendar he'd carved into the wall to represent how much longer they had to stay in jail. Suddenly, there was a clicking sound. Someone was unlocking the cell. Sean and Layla looked at each other, confused. The cell door slid open to reveal a set of bars. A guard was letting them out. Layla threw her covers off and walked over to the bars. There was another clicking sound and the bars swung open. Sean ran to Layla's side. The guard told them to step out of the cell with a hand gesture.

“What’s going on?” Layla asked the guard.

“Our majesty, Queen Clarabelle, has requested your presence.” He told her.

Sean grinned. He grabbed Layla’s hand and dragged her out of the cell. The guard held on to Sean’s other arm and led the couple to the exit of the penitentiary. They walked down the long hall way. The man at the desk that blocked off the rest of the hall was burying his face in a good book. The guard cleared his throat and the man spun around in his chair. His face lit up when he saw Layla but turned sad when he realized that she was being escorted out of jail. He walked around his desk and opened the little gate in front. The guard pushed Sean through first. As he pushed Layla, she caught a glimpse of the man at the desk give her the evil eye. She looked away quickly. When the guard was through the gate, he grabbed Sean’s arm again. The three of them continued to stroll through the palace. They passed paintings, sculptures, and collages and sketches that were on display. Sean was used to it, but Layla was astonished. Never had she seen so much elegance in one building. As Layla was gazing at the art, she hadn’t noticed that they’d stopped walking. Suddenly, there was a strong tug on her shirt sleeve. She turned and saw that Sean was being pulled away by another guard. She grabbed his hand and tried to yank him from the guard’s grip. The guard that had escorted them around the palace grabbed Layla’s shirt collar and pulled her into another choke hold.

“Turns out that the boy stays in the cell while you’re out. My friend is just taking him back to the penitentiary.” The guard said loudly in Layla’s ear.

She didn’t care if nothing bad was happening. She thrashed and kicked and squirmed. Sean was still fighting to break free from the other guards hold.

“No! I can’t go back!” he shouted.

He looked at Layla and the way she was being choked. His face turned horrified. He tried to reach for her but the guard was too strong. Sean was dragged back the way they’d come. He shouted Layla’s name as he was lugged around a corner. The guard let go of Layla. She fell onto the floor, coughing and gasping. The guard reached down and hauled Layla to her feet by the arm.

“Sorry about that. My name is Dennis.” He said while picking Layla up.

She brushed the dirt off of her jeans and turned to Dennis.

“It’s cool. My name is Layla.” She said.

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Dennis didn't say anything else. He grabbed Layla's hand and they walked the rest of the way to the palace's main lobby. In front of the check-in desk was a beautiful lady. Her hair was snow white and curled. Her skin was ghostly pale and she wore a necklet to match her flowing white dress. She must be Clarabelle. Dennis shoved Layla towards her. Layla gulped hard. Clarabelle hooked arms with Layla and led her to a large room with no color. The walls were plain white and there were dirt floors. The room was a small box. There wasn't one piece of furniture. The queen sat down and folded her arms. Layla sat in front of her.

“Apparently, someone has faith in you. It is said that you, my girl, could be The One.” Clarabelle said.

Layla knew this would come up again sooner or later.

“Honestly, I think you all have a problem. The One sounds like a myth.” She said.

The queen's facial expression didn't change.

“The One,” Clarabelle finally said, “is the protector of this clan.”

Layla had the desire to scream at the queen and tell her that The Max Clan is a ridiculous story and that everyone, including herself, is crazy for getting involved. The urge was too strong and Layla couldn't hold back. *Oh, snap.*

“Stop it! Just stop it! None of this exists! You people are driving me crazy! You're just a lunatic! This is a fantasy! You need to start living in the real world! Reality is a great thing. I THINK YOU SHOULD TRY IT!” she yelled.

Layla sprang off the floor and kicked some dirt onto Clarabelle's dress. She closed her eyes tight. Layla spun around on her heels and started for the door. She heard the queen stand behind her. As Layla was about to reach for the door, it vanished. The wall twisted and turned and the door shrunk. It became smaller and smaller until it disappeared altogether. Layla's eyes were wide open. Her jaw dropped and she felt light-headed. She turned to face Clarabelle. The queen was extending her hand in Layla's direction. It was her who had shrunken the door. Layla felt like she might faint. Surprisingly, she didn't come close to fainting at all. She now wanted to witness Clarabelle's every move. She wouldn't dare miss any of her next actions. Queen Clarabelle put her hand back to her side. She looked as calm as ever.

When she started walking, Layla backed up. Clarabelle stopped when she was close enough to reach out and touch Layla on the nose. She pointed to Layla's feet and the floor cracked. A small hole formed beneath Layla and she fell right through. She screamed as she dropped into endless space. She looked up and saw the queen waving at her through the hole. Layla was even more terrified. It seemed that the queen was waving because she actually meant *goodbye forever*. Suddenly, her thoughts vanished. She landed with a soft *plop*. Layla looked around her. She was back on her bunk in her cell. The ceiling was back and the hole was gone. The bottom of the top bunk was above her. There was a creak and a face appeared at the edge of the top bunk. Sean's eyes opened wide. He rolled over and dropped off the bed and to the floor. He stood up next to Layla's bunk.

“When did you get here? How *did* you get here?” he asked in an amusingly high voice.

Layla turned her head towards him.

“I have no idea” she said, a little hoarse.

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Layla sat up and swung her legs around the side of the bed. She looked all around the cell and later focused her eyes on Sean.

â I am *so* sorry.â She told him.

â Why?â Sean asked, confused.

â You were right. This place is real. You people started as rocks from the future. People here can do magic. This is The Max Clan and youâ re part of it.â

â You get it now.â Sean said, smiling.

â I do. And your queen, Clarabelle, told me who The One is and honestly, Iâ m not it.â

Seanâ s smile faded.

â What?â

â I canâ t save this place. Iâ m just a city girl.â

â No. Youâ re much more than a city girl. Youâ re *you*. I havenâ t known you long, Layla, but when I first met you, I knew youâ d do great things someday. Why not start here?â

Layla hesitated.

â What does The One do?â she asked.

â Well,â Sean began, â The One saves the clan from a special attack that is said to come every one-hundred years to destroy The Max Clan. Of course, itâ s The Karma Clan that launches the attack. Both clans have a â Oneâ . The One leads the clan into battle and is the secret weapon. The One is expected to make plenty of sacrifices during war or suffer.â

â And you think Iâ m The One?â

â Indeed, I do.â

## Chapter 7

### Dear Old Dad

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The 20 prison guards sat around the bunk on small chairs they'd brought from the lobby. Sean sat next to Layla on her bed.

“So, what do you think?” he asked all the guards.

The guards all nodded up and down. Sean turned to Layla and tilted his head. Layla shook her head.

“No. I can't do this. A war? Do I look like a girl fit enough to fight in a war?” she exclaimed while looking around the room frantically.

Some of the guards grunted and others shrugged. Only one of them stood. He was wearing a helmet that hid every single one of his facial features except for his eyes. He walked up to the bunk and knelt down in front of Layla. He bowed his head in respect. Sean and Layla exchanged looks. This display was very unsettling. The guard then lifted his head and removed his mask. Layla gasped.

“Dad?!” she yelled, “What are you doing here?”

Daniel Walker smiled at his flabbergasted daughter.

“Surprise! I'm a Max!” he laughed.

Sean wrapped an arm around Layla's shoulder. Her dad pointed at him.

“You keep your hands to yourself, buster.” He said.

Sean smiled.

“I see where you get that finger thing from, Layla.” He said sarcastically.

Layla reached out and grabbed her father's arm.

“It's okay, Dad. He's a nice boy.” She said quickly and embarrassed.

“Sorry, sweetheart.” Daniel sighed, “Us Max dads are pretty protective when it comes to our little girls.”

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Layla took her hand off of Daniel's arm and placed it on her lap. She brushed some strands of hair out of her face.

"Wait. If you're a Max, then I'm a Max!" Layla's voice trailed off.

"A Max!" Daniel continued.

Layla's eyes widened. Sean swore they could be seen in Space. He took his arm off Layla's shoulder and tapped her on the cheek. She was completely frozen. Sean then knew that she'd realized what this meant. This meant that her whole life, from age one to thirteen, was a lie. It was all a fantasy. A play. A game. A *distraction*. Her friends didn't know the real her. Her family, other than her dad, wasn't her family at all. Her whole identity was a scam. She felt she didn't even know herself anymore. Sean didn't blame her for being so surprised. He was also tremendously stunned when he found out about his true life. He also felt like a stranger to himself. He'd felt like the person he thought he was, was an entirely different person and that the person he was supposed to be, an entirely different person, and he was just a lonely soul in the middle, trying to choose which person to resume its life in. He knew Layla felt the same way at that moment. He didn't want her to feel that way at all. It was an awful feeling. Sean knew he had to snap Layla out of it. He put a hand on Layla's cheek and turned her head towards his. He leaned in and kissed her passionately. When he pulled away, color returned to Layla's face. Sean looked around the room at all of the shocked faces, enjoying Daniel's infuriated expression the most.

"Bingo!" he shouted happily, and burst out laughing.

Layla started blinking rapidly and she looked around the room. Daniel realized he was still kneeling and cleared his throat. He slowly started to stand, stopped halfway when there was a low cracking sound, and continued back up. By the time he was standing straight and tall, Layla was back to reality. Sean told her there was no need to thank him and she assured him that she wasn't planning to do so anyway, and they shared a good laugh. Daniel scolded Sean, still angry about the kiss, and he and Layla's laughter died down. Layla gave out one last giggle and Daniel scolded her too. She immediately closed her mouth. One of the guards cleared his throat and Daniel whirled around and speed-walked back to his chair.

"Anyway," Daniel began, "Layla, I know you're qualified to be The One. It's in your blood!"

Layla gulped. She didn't want to let her dad down.

"I'm sorry. I can't do it." she said.

A heavy wave of silence fell over the cell. Layla put her hands on her face and covered her eyes so no one could see the tears trickling down her cheeks. She stood and ran out of the open cell door. The prison guards stood, including Daniel, and sprinted after her. Sean then realized that the guards thought Layla was attempting to escape. He leaped off the bed and chased the guards out the cell. Two of them shoved Sean back in and closed the bar doors. Sean got off the cell floor and slammed into the bars. He tried shaking them but nothing worked. He turned around, pressed his back against the bars, and sighed. He thought all was lost and that there was no way out of this situation. Then he saw the *vent*.

"You're just full of good luck, eh?"

The vent was above the bunk bed and was clearly large enough for a man to crawl through. Sean walked over to the bunk and started climbing up the ladder. He reached the top and sat on his bed. The vent was slightly to

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the left and was just out of reach. Sean put one hand on the ladder and reached out towards the ceiling with the other. He slowly leaned forward and his fingers wrapped around one of the bars between two the slips in the vent that hot air was blustering out of. He let go of the ladder and quickly swung his free hand to the vent. Sean tightened his grip and inched his legs over the edge of the bunk. They swung back and forth underneath him and he pulled himself up towards one of the many large spaces in the vent. He let go with his right hand and raised it through the space. He placed it down on the cold surface of the inside of the vent and pushed downwards to raise the rest of his body.

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