Although you're not here

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Although you're not here

by [LobbyLane](#)

Summary

It's been a month since Max let Leo stay with him now. And he's hardly spoken since then. Max's bad conscience is nearly killing him by now, whereas Leo notices more than he admits. Leo/ Max ; The Producers (c) Mel Brooks

Max watched his partner from the distance. He wondered whether he should say something or just leave things the way they were. Leo's been with him for more than a month now and he couldn't really say a lot of things had changed. Well, apart from him having a roommate all of a sudden of course. But still, Leo hardly spoke. Not a word apart from the daily "Good morning" or "good night" he merely breathed.

Max knew why he acted that way of course. A broken heart and the great fear of getting hurt. He'd probably have to work some things out on his own too. But the moments the older man wondered whether he could do anything about it grew to be more and more. He had been very close to just saying something for the past few days. But actually each time he tried to, every single thought was gone. There was nothing witty he could say to cheer him up. Leo probably wouldn't have gotten it right anyway. Not in his current state of mind for that matter.

Max felt guilty though. He couldn't shake that feeling as easily as he thought. It had been his fault Leo suffered silently after all. And worst of all he couldn't even apologize without revealing the whole truth and that would let Leo drift even more away from him. It was a mess. And the longer he thought about it, the more convinced he was he never should have done it. Still, Leo was here now. And seeing him like that hurt. It was like the punishment for his actions he deserved though.

Once or twice he had been thinking about asking Roger for help, but he abandoned it again quickly. Asking Roger would mean facing his sassy little appendage too and as a matter of fact he didn't approve at all. Max knew. Roger was the one he could convince. At least that's what he thought. But with Carmen around it wasn't as easy as it used to be either. No, there was nothing to it. They knew more than they should anyway. Luckily they swore not to say anything to the former accountant. It was possible they wanted Max to sort out his problems on his own, but as he himself was so determined not to mention anything of it to Leo, it appeared rather difficult to find a way to communicate at all. Hell, he didn't even want to think about it and let it sink into oblivion. Who would have known Leo would come here in his despair? Here of all places...

And now he sat there and watched the younger man working through that pile of books on the desk. Unfortunately Leo had never been really good in hiding his feelings or thoughts or the moments he'd simply drift away into another world.

He was turning the papers of his books in regular intervals and everyone would have taken it as him simply reading. But Max knew he was not. He saw his eyes. He never blinked. He never moved them. And he looked as though he'd fall asleep any minute. Truth was he was only staring into space, trying to fool people around him he was working. But no. Leo was somewhere else.

It felt as though a stranger spent his days with Max and he really started to miss the old days. The laughter and the fights and the talks and everything. He was used to live alone. But being alone while having company was somewhat new to him and he liked it even less.

So, what had he got to lose? The worst that could happen was Leo still not talking to him, right?

"Have you slept at all?" he asked as if out of his mind.

He bit his lips only a second later. That was probably the stupidest thing he could have asked. He might as well could have asked about the weather or his day, even though they've been together all that time. Why did he do it? It was silly. It was useless. Leo wouldn't even react. Max thought about kicking himself right away. He might a s well could get up and move out of the room, pretending he didn't say anything. But actually there was no chance Leo might have missed that question, for his head lifted and his eyes met Max's.

"Why do you ask?" his voice even sounded different. Not as uncertain as usually. No, in a way indifferent. Or tired. Or maybe Max was only interpreting too much into it. Why was he even thinking about it that much? He never cared. So why now?

Max sighed. Of course, he knew perfectly well why, even though he tried to forget about it. But there was that little voice in the back of it head screaming it into his mind over and over again.

"I... I just thought, well...you look a little tired. That's all," Max answered. Damn, did that sound casually enough? Or was it too casual? Leo shouldn't know he worried for days about him. Or maybe he should know. Max shook his head. This was confusing. He didn't even know what to think anymore.

"I've got some problems sleeping, that's true," Leo answered dryly.

"Thought so," Max replied, looking at him worried.

He knew he should say something. This was the first bit of a conversation they've had in weeks. But somehow he didn't know how to attach to that silly attempt of a start at all.

"It's not that hard to get when you are walking up and down the office yourself every night," Leo continued without looking up.

Max stared at him with wide eyes. He noticed? Holy sh... How what he supposed to explain this? He had been so careful. Or so he thought.

"Don't try to fool me," Leo said once more, now looking up again. "I know you've been as tired as I am, if not even more. You hardly slept ever since I showed up here. So, what's this attempt to talk about it all of a sudden?"

Leo didn't sound angry at all, but compassionate. Something that confused Max even more.

"I wasn't trying to...," he started but the younger man quickly shook his head.

"I know I've been more on the quiet side lately," he said. "And I appreciate you didn't try anything about it until now. But please,...and don't take this the wrong way, I think I need a little more time."

Max nodded and looked to the ground.

"As long as you need," he answered, but wasn't sure if Leo really got that last bit. He was looking down to his book again already and Max felt that painful emptiness creeping up inside of him again.

He wondered how much longer that 'little more time' might be. But well, after all Leo said quite clearly what he thought. Something he'd never done before too. So, there was nothing more for Max to do than wait. Even though he knew it would tear him apart insight, if that was really Leo's wish he would obey it.

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It was late at night when Max opened his eyes again. He couldn't really sleep. Again. He'd been trying to, but all that time his mind was working too fast even though his eyes had been closed. Everything Leo had said ran through him as though he was breathing those words in. And the guilt nearly ate him up alive.

Heaven's if he'd known he'd cause something like that to the person he wanted so much to be happy, he surely wouldn't have done any of it. It had been selfish anyway. A thousand times he had tried to figure out why he had tried so desperately to part Ulla and Leo. He had been happy after all. Everyone had been able to see it. So why the hell, as his best friend, had he been the only one loathing the luck of his partner. Because he loved him? A fact he'd simply had to face after a while. But what was he expecting? To find Leo in his arms; choosing him over Ulla? It was madness to believe it for only one second. He knew that now, but it was too late to change it.

"What kind of person are you?" he thought and closed his eyes again. It had been a horrible thing to do. And as hard as he tried he couldn't shake the feeling that Leo knew he had something to do with it.

So what if Roger had been right? What if the only way to forget about it was to talk to Leo about it? And what if Leo left him then? Well, in that case he'd get what he deserved.

But what if Leo really knew anything? Spending so much time with that flamboyant little partner of Roger it wouldn't even surprise him. Carmen swore not to say anything, but Max didn't trust him. So why believe him? And wouldn't Leo have said anything? Blame him? Accuse him of being a total traitor? He didn't want to talk now. He said so himself. And what if he never spoke again? Max was sure he couldn't bear it.

No, it was impossible. After all, it had been Leo himself who asked to stay here. He wouldn't have done it if he was really angry with Max. And he probably wouldn't stay here either if he knew.

No, the most plausible explanation at that moment was that Leo simply needed a time off. From everything. He needed to understand his life had changed drastically. And he probably even had to understand he'd lost the most beautiful woman he'd ever met too.

"Damn it, Max," he thought again. "Maybe there's a chance you can talk to that woman. Maybe she'd even take him back."

But he couldn't finish his thought as he heard footsteps in the corridor once more.

Max sighed. So Leo was awake again. He wanted to get up. He wanted to open that door and face him; take him into his arms and tell him everything's gonna be alright. He wanted him to start screaming and crying, only so he'd get rid of all these emotions remaining trapped insight of the younger man. But at the same time he knew it would be the worst thing to do.

So, he stayed where he was, just listening to the footsteps Leo made outside of that door.

It almost sounded as though they were coming closer. But maybe he was only imagining it, listening so carefully to them. Or was he?

Max teared his eyes open again, but didn't dare to move only seconds later. Leo had stopped. In front of his door, so it seemed. And suddenly he heard his door opening.

Max froze. Leo was here?! Inside this room? He still held his breath. He hoped so much Leo wouldn't notice he was awake. God only knew what he was doing here in the middle of the night.

Again, his footsteps were to be heard. Max closed his eyes quickly. This must be a dream. He was sure of that. Maybe he'd been thinking that much about everything he finally fell asleep.

Then a terrible silence followed. Whatever was going on he wasn't able to tell. He listened carefully, but he couldn't even say if Leo was still insight his room or not.

His eyes opened again in shock when he felt his bed sink a little next to him and he felt the warmth of a body cuddling close to him.

"What the...," he thought and slowly turned with big eyes.

Leo was lying next to him, snuggling closer. His eyes were closed and he was breathing steadily. Max felt shocked though. Leo usually wasn't at all touchy or anything, but this seemed more like he was fast asleep. Max slowly lifted his hand and waved it carefully in front of Leo's eyes. He pulled it away though quickly afterwards.

"He's asleep," he thought. Unbelievable. Leo sleepwalking? He'd never noticed before he did this. It was strange. Obviously he must have mistaken Max's room for his own.

Still, Leo snuggled closer to Max and flung his arms around him. Max's body stiffened in shock. He didn't know what to do or how to move. He held his breath again, staring down at Leo in disbelief.

But suddenly he froze again and almost gasped as he noticed Leo's face.

Tears were running down his cheeks and even though he was fast asleep he looked more desperate than ever.

"God, Leo," Max whispered with merely any voice.

"Max," Leo murmured all of a sudden.

Max's eyes widened again. He was talking too?

"Max... Please don't go away too," Leo mumbled.

It was then Max noticed what was going on. It was about time Leo found some sleep after all those days. And most likely the young man fell asleep out of exhaustion. But while in that state he finally let his inner thoughts slip. He was devastated; probably feeling more alone than ever, even though he tried to hide it over the weeks. But this here made it clear to Max. It wasn't at all like Leo was sour with him. On the contrary, he was more than scared Max would leave him too.

"Oh Leo," Max said, stroking over his hair. "Forgive me."

He'd pulled the blanket a little higher; at least as much as he was possible to. He would have gotten up and let him sleep there in peace, but unfortunately Leo still held on to him. It was kinda an embarrassing situation if he thought about it, but he couldn't move unless he wanted to wake him.

So, Max decided to just remain where he was. He hoped instantly Leo wouldn't freak out once he woke up in the morning. But after all, it wasn't Max's decision that Leo and himself shared one bed. Although he must admit he felt his heart hammering against his chest the longer he lay there.

But finally he felt that long awaited tiredness coming over him.

He cast another look at Leo who for the first time in weeks looked so peaceful, sleeping there next to him.

And for once, even though it was madness, Max wished it could always be like that...

~The End~

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