

## Tricks

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/10369299) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/10369299>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Category:	<a href="#">M/M</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">The Producers (2005)</a>
Relationships:	<a href="#">Max Bialystock/Leopold "Leo" Bloom</a> , <a href="#">Roger De Bris/Carmen Ghia</a>
Characters:	<a href="#">Max Bialystock</a> , <a href="#">Leopold Bloom</a> , <a href="#">Carmen Ghia</a> , <a href="#">Roger De Bris</a>
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2017-03-19 Words: 3,767 Chapters: 1/1

# Tricks

by [LobbyLane](#)

## Summary

An invitation from Carmen and Roger? Max is sitting in hell, having to survive an afternoon in their house, but Leo seems to enjoy it more than he grasps at first. Leo/Carmen; Leo/Max the Producers (c) Mel Brooks

## Notes

A/N: Actually, this started out as a fun little drabble, but somehow grew a little more ;) And I figured it fitted in my little story-cycle perfectly. So, I hope you'll enjoy :)

How the hell did I bring myself into this situation? I know my eye is twitching, even though I promised myself to remain unobtrusive. Literally. But now as I take a quick look at Leo next to me I am well aware it must be very obvious I can't believe it. He gives me that look. And it's causing me to shake my head quickly and I am forcing myself to a grin again. Just stare straight ahead, Max. Everything will turn out fine. After all, this can't last forever now, can it? But as I turn my head away from Leo (and away from Roger and Carmen for that matter) I am reminded again where I am. Jeez, is that a golden statue of an Adonis next to me? I never noticed it before. But then I usually just rushed in here, talked to them and left. It sounds silly, but I never dared to notice anything on purpose. 'Stare straight ahead' I would usually tell myself over and over again. NO pun intended. Well, I am not really sure if this will work now. Hell, who'd ever have suspected me to be treated as though I was one of them? If someone told me I'd be spending my precious afternoons over at Roger's, drinking some sugary kind of fruit tea in pink porcelain cups and having the privates of one of their kitschy statues almost piercing me; I'd declared it the end of the world immediately.

And worst of all I know perfectly well Leo's enjoying it. I can see it in his smile and the unfamiliar casual way he is sitting there and talking to them. He never does this with anyone else but me. Proof enough he really likes them. Way to go, Sherlock. How many times has he told you he considered them as family? But it's not really the worst part. I know he comes here voluntarily at least twice a week, so there is absolutely no reason to think he doesn't enjoy it. Get a load of that!

Am I frowning? Oh God, I hope not.

But in my defense, it hasn't been my idea to come here in the first place. Who would have thought Roger and Carmen invited the two of us over to spend a little 'Family Quality Time'. Usually they know perfectly well it's only Leo appearing to this shit. Maybe that's why they didn't tell what they wanted in the first place? Damn! They knew they'd have been in a lot of trouble even mentioning it. They tricked me. Did Leo know? Or did they fool him too? But fake or not; he enjoys it. And it's fine. I just don't get what the hell they need the two of us for? I mean I expected them to invite Leo over as they do it so often anyway, but no... Carmen especially insisted I had to come too and only because Leo never gets tired of telling me how much he loves Carmen and me getting along now I did agree. So there was no way of turning it down.

One more look over at Leo tells me it's been the right decision though. This is what he always wanted after all. So maybe I should relax a little more. It's just... I never knew how hard it is to act along, although I know how they are. It's something completely different though to endure that 'fused together' undefined creature disguising itself as two human beings outside of the theatre too. Well, more or less.

I feel Leo's elbow pressing itself in my side in a painful punch. I whirl around and am about to complain loudly about it but as I see him still fixating Roger and Carmen and smiling his brightest smile, I start to listen. Nothing! No sound. No high-pitched voices and no conversation about...whatever they were talking about.

Leo's smile looks frozen though as does his stare and he doesn't blink.

Wait a minute. No one says anything?!

I turn my head once more to find Roger and Carmen staring at me. No, not staring. Roger's eyebrow is lifted expectantly and Carmen looks as though he is about to burst into laughter any second.

Damn it! They've asked something. And since Leo ain't answering, they've probably meant me.

"I...er..." I stutter. Damn it. How am I supposed to explain I wasn't really listening?

"Surely you agree that we should do this again soon?" Leo smiles at me, his arms crossed in front of his chest.

A smile only on the outside. His stare literally screams "Stop staring and listen to them!" though. He noticed. Why does he always notice? Well, he knows me better than I know myself so why am I even wondering?

"Yeah," I hesitate not taking my eyes away from Leo. I hope they don't notice. "We...ugh...we sure should."

Again Leo grins widely.

I hate you for this. Right now I really hate you.

He winks at me. He knows! That son of a ...

I narrow my eyes and keep staring at him. But he only bursts into laughter. My anger turns into confusion within seconds. And I notice I must look pretty stupid not moving anymore but gazing with wide eyes at Leo who laughs hysterically now. And I only dare to turn my head when I hear Roger's and Carmen voices joining him. Obviously something must be extremely funny. Something I can't grasp right now. And something tells me that very something is me. I'm feeling my face blush, sitting in their midst and not getting it.

"What?" I ask and look at Roger, who at least is eying me still.

"You could at least try to be a little more convincing," he answered chuckling.

I have to smirk. That's just Roger. Nothing gets past him.

I want to answer something but he is quicker.

"Oh, Max," Roger says and shakes his head slightly. "What shocks you so much? You've been here before..."

"Not like that," I think but start to relax a little and smile at him.

"It's the fear of ending up like us too," Carmen joins in cheerfully.

"It's not!" I reply quickly.

It really isn't. Or is it? I am not sure anymore. And I am still not used to being analyzed by Carmen. Looking into his grinning face doesn't change that little fact either. Gosh, how much easier has it been when he simply glanced at me wickedly and grunted at every comment I made. I'm not sure if I was really made for this 'best buddy' stuff. And even though I know Carmen changed his mind about me and despite the little fact that I've grown pretty fond of him too, it's still strange from time to time.

"Max, please," Carmen jeers and puts his cup down in a very dance-like manner. "I know this is strange for you. You've never spent so much time here and as far as I recall you've never dared to look around like you just did. But relax, for heaven's sake. You won't run around in a pink tutu afterwards as you're probably fearing."

"Unless of course, you want to," Roger grins deviously.

I have absolutely no idea how he is doing it but I sense Leo is hanging on his lips right now. All I can do is blink once or twice at him. I hope Roger gets that he is absolutely out of his mind.

"Plus I think it's cute how much Leo tries to cover up for you," Carmen adds and grins over to him.

"I wasn't," he answers and much to my delight I see this adorable blush on his cheeks now too.

"Were too," Carmen replied. "Don't worry though. It's cute."

"You think?" Leo bites his lips and strokes a strand out of his face.

Carmen nods and they don't stop looking into each other's eyes.

"Oh leave it there," Carmen says then and bends over to loosen Leo's strand again. I watch it fall into his face casually. And Leo's smile grows even more.

"It looks better that way," Carmen says maybe a little too gently and now cups Leo's cheek with one hand.

I hold my breath. Leo lowers his gaze now but that darn smile doesn't vanish. What the hell is happening here? Is he flirting? With Carmen?

I feel my eyes growing and my heartbeat stopping.

This can't be. Surely I'm not thinking straight anymore. Well, what a surprise being in this house. I want to laugh at my own stupidity right now... If only I could.

Leo and Carmen are friends. They have been for ages. Nothing to worry about. Damn it, Max! Get a grip! You miss the wood for the trees. This means nothing. Carmen has always been a very 'touching' person and Leo never once had something against this cuddly, almost girlish habit of him. Plus, Carmen is married. No, your brain plays tricks on you. That's all.

"Max?"

My head whirls around. Leo looks at me questioning. Fuck. Not again...

What did he say? What in heaven's name did he say?

"Is that okay with you?" he asks.

"Sure," I try to sound cool. Unimpressed. Normal in a way.

But when Leo happily grins and gets up while Carmen does the same I feel like I'm about to panic. Blasted thoughts. Why couldn't I just listen? Just for once.

I follow hem with my eyes. I don't move, don't breathe; don't dare to say one word. Where are they going? Roger remains where he is. He looks pretty relaxed though. No need to worry. After all, Roger would be first in line if he sensed anyone being too close to his partner. In any way whatsoever...

Carmen opens the huge windows which lead directly to their balcony and the courtyard of this house and seconds later they vanish outside. I hold my breath while staring after them.

"Oh don't worry," I hear Roger and slowly turn my head again. "They're doing that often."

What?! How much worse could this get? What the hell is Leo doing when he spends time here?

"Doing what?" I hear myself asking. Oh God, did that come out wrong?

I cough. This doesn't concern me at all. Quickly, I grab my cup and take a large sip of that horrible swill of melted sugar dyed in the queer devil's color. I am in gay hell! No other explanation possible...

Roger laughs out loud, causing me to open my eyes once more.

"What's wrong with you?" he asks, obviously pretty amused. "I don't think I've ever seen you like that."

"Like what?"

"So tense," he answers. "Is it because of the two of them?"

How on earth is he doing that? My eyes wander towards that window again.

"Max, are you jealous?" Roger grins at me and I feel his hand patting my shoulder. "Well, that's somehow new."

"I am not," I answer defiantly and again my face is getting hot. As fast as possible I turn my head away from him.

"They talk."

"What?"

"About anything," Roger explains and casually leans back again, resting his arm over the backrest of that armchair he sits in. "I don't know for sure. It's become some kind of ritual for both of them. Maybe it makes them feel more secure being out there. Maybe they feel more free. I can't say for sure."

I listen carefully. I know they are friends. And I know they spend a lot of time together.

My gaze falls on the little golden ring Roger is wearing. He and Carmen...

I have to laugh. What is wrong with me? Leo being here has never been a problem to me. And I would have killed myself rather than coming with him. So in a way I caused whatever happens here too, didn't I? But that little ring knocks the truth into me right now. I should definitely trust him. Hell, after all that time I really should. And it's Leo. He's never done anything not to deserve my trust. Suddenly I'm feeling embarrassed. Great!

"You know, if it bothers you that much," Roger says softly all of a sudden. "You should do something against it."

"What?" I've surely misunderstood him right now. What am I supposed to do? Rush out there and kick Carmen down that god-damn balcony? I could never do that. Even though I feel extremely like it, this is no possibility. Not after all the effort it took to finally get along with him.

"Make him yours," Roger winks at me.

My eyes grow to a new size. Is that what he meant? No! No! No, No, No, No! My body starts to stiffen and I feel my hands getting sweaty. Apparently my whole being stems itself against that very idea.

"Are you kidding?" I jeer, trying hard to act as though this is a big joke and I lean back. There's no way I shall let him see this affects me in any way.

"Why not?" Roger grins.

"It's against the law," I answer dryly.

"So what?" Roger shrugs and his eyes are piercing me. Why can't he look away just for a second? "Didn't stop me. They can't control what you are doing. Screw society."

"It wouldn't be real!"

"It's as real as you make it!"

"I'm too old for this!"

"Don't be silly," Roger laughs again. "You're never too old to be in love. And you are. Otherwise you wouldn't almost freak out seeing Carmen and Leo like that."

"I'm not..."

"Jealousy is the best sign, Max," Roger goes on. "And it's up to you to do something about it."

"All I need to do," I reply. "Is getting used to them. That's all."

Roger giggled. "Oh please! He only touched him. Have you seen them together a little longer? Believe me, you wouldn't believe. This will only get worse!"

Worse? What does he mean? I hold my breath and I swear my heart skips a beat just imagining it. What could they possibly do? The way Roger spoke it sounded as though they usually were ripping their clothes off of each other and start doing... NO, MAX! Stop right here! Take that thought, slice it, burn it and flush it down the toilet! Too much!

I get up quickly and march over to that window. One little look outside will calm me again. I'm stressed because I'm not used to it. My fault, I admit. I should have come here more often. I'm simply overreacting. Nothing more. That damn Roger. Planting this shit into me. And then that notion... Typical. He only wants me to follow his path. But there's no way. Not this time. I'm not like him. Like them. Leo and me... We are not like that. And I think I admitted enough to them. I am with a man and they know. They simply cannot expect more. Roger is wrong. So wr...

WHAT THE...?

I almost fall over, not believing my eyes.

Leo and Carmen stand there. Close to each other. Well, close is understated really. Leo leans against the wall and Carmen almost presses his body to him. He couldn't flee even if he wanted to. And he smiles. His face flushes and he -I don't fucking believe this- smiles! And then, there's that look. I know that look. A starry-eyed, dreamy look. LEO!

I want to scream his name. But seeing what comes next I feel more like dying that very moment than imagining to bring out just one sound.

Carmen bends forward slightly and kisses Leo! Their lips touch! Their eyes close. And it lasts an eternity. At least to me. Leo doesn't fight him. Not in the slightest. No, he moves along.

This can't be true! THIS! CANNOT! BE FUCKING TRUE!

My jaw drops and without anyone saying it, I know all the blood drains from my face.

That's it! Enough.

I hardly notice marching outside and with one quick grip I capture Leo's shoulders and pull him away from that traitor, holding him close to myself.

"What the hell do you think you are doing?" I scream at Carmen on top of my voice. "How dare you touching him? So this is what you had planned all along! I knew I never should have trusted you!"



"Max!" Leo said next to, but I can't stop.

"I knew you meant trouble from the beginning," I keep on yelling. "I just never thought I'd fall for it! But I am warning you just this once, Scott!"

Am I using his real name? I never do. But I feel he needs to understand the seriousness his actions mean. Right here and now!

"If you ever come close to him again," I bellow but he grins.

Unbelievable. He simply grins and crosses his arms again. How can he stand there so calmly? Oh gosh, how much I long to slap that grin out of him right now.

But then I feel a hand softly touching my shoulder and whirl around only to find Leo smiling softly at me too.

That look! There it is again... What does this mean?

He gently touches my face and leans his forehead to mine.

"Jealous indeed," he giggles.

"What?" My voice is almost gone in surprise. I keep on staring into his brown eyes. And in a flash I've forgotten what I wanted to say; what I wanted to do to Carmen.

"I wasn't sure," Leo speaks again. "You've never shown a hint of jealousy."

"Leo," I am able to answer. "I..."

But he shakes his head.

"It's alright," he whispers and snuggles closer, his grin is spreading over his whole face now. "It makes me happy."

"It does?" Damn it. Why is that smile so infectious? I can't help but join him. And I feel my anger vanishing.

Leo nods.

"The best evidence you've ever given to me," he says silently.

"Evidence for what?"

Leo doesn't answer. He smiles at me and then comes closer, kissing me softly. I can't believe it. Then he flings his arms around me and presses his cheek to mine. I close my eyes and inhale deeply. Slowly my arms wander across his back too and before I even realize what I am doing I find myself embracing him right here. I should be angry. I should kill him. I should be beating the shit out of Carmen for that treachery. But somehow Leo manages I am lost again. Lost in that hug. Lost in that embrace... Lost in him.

"It's all I wanted to know," I hear him whisper again and I open my eyes.

He pulls away a little to face me once more. Somewhere in between that grin on his face had changed into that sentimental, almost cliched, soft smile he's throwing at me now.

"Max?" he asks softly.

"Yes?" I answer a little uncertain.

"Would you marry me?"

I gasp. What? He couldn't... He didn't just... Damn it, he can't seriously... He knows pretty well what I thought about that. He knew I...

"Yes," I answer in a whisper, leaning forward until my forehead touches his and I add with almost no voice anymore: "There's nothing I'd love more..."

God, has this been real? Have I just... Yes, I have. I am defeated. And funny enough, it doesn't feel strange. Or wrong. On the contrary, it feels warm and good and ...just right. I see tears in Leo's eyes as he kisses me once again. Oh my god, my knees are growing weak. He's so close. This is just so right. So perfect.

When he finally pulls away, I can hear Roger again and both of us turn our heads.

He stands next to Carmen with his arm around his shoulder and looks more than satisfied. Carmen clutches his hand over his mouth and I can see tears glittering in his eyes as well, even though he smiles from ear to ear.

"It worked, Darling," Roger says to him then and he only nods.

"So it seems," Leo answers happily.

"What?" I look at him, puzzling when he turned his head to me once more.

"I knew you would never find the guts to admit you wanted to," Leo speaks calmly. "Let alone asking me. So I figured I had to do it somehow."

I don't understand a word. Quickly I look from Leo to Roger to Carmen and back to Leo. What are they implying here?

"So, I've asked them for help," he continues. "I had no idea how to mention it to you. And I thought you would kill me merely for the idea. I had to find out. And jealousy is something you never have shown before. Until today. And it means..., well,... This is serious. It never has been before. Not to you at least."

I turn to Roger and Carmen again, flabbergasted. They only nod though. Both of them look touched.

"This," I start. "This was a trick?"

"I'm sorry for that," Carmen says, stepping closer. His cheeks blush slightly. "It was Leo's idea. Just to find out, you know."

"It was?" I raise one eyebrow at Leo.

"I knew you'd go berserk seeing that," he giggles and then turns to Carmen. "Thank you though."

"Any time," he winks back at him. The shocked look on my face must scare him though and he quickly adds: "Oh, don't worry. Not that way. After all, I've already tied the knot."

Roger starts to laugh and comes closer to hug his partner. Gosh, husband and wife; that's what they were. Now more than ever. I shake my head and start to grin slightly seeing it.

But in a way, we weren't so different after all. I feel Leo at my side and he cheerfully flings his arms around me once again.

"I'm sorry," I say in Carmen's direction. "for...for thinking..."

"Forgotten," he smiles at me.

So, this is it then. As much as I've tried to stand against it. Against the 'Roger-and-Carmen-ish' way of this whole being together; against this cliched, pseudo-romantic thing society made up long ago to symbolize the bond of two people in love for the whole world to see... Now I am in the middle of it all. I am engaged.

And it feels right. Maybe it should have been like that a long time ago.

And seeing Leo smiling that brightly next to me, lets me know I am right for once.

~The End~

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