

What they lost (and what Ottawa gained)

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What they lost (and what Ottawa gained)

by [mssarahx](#)

Summary

Montreal tried to get Shane Hollander back. Shane and Ilya laughed, stayed married, and won anyway.

Montreal realizes they want Shane Hollander back the same way people usually realize irreversible things:
too late, through a screenshot, with a sense of dread they can't quite justify.

The photo is innocuous. Shane and Ilya in Ottawa, post-practice, arms slung around each other, Shane mid-laugh like happiness is no longer something he has to ration. Someone captions it *culture matters*.

The replies are feral.

Ilya notices first.

"They follow you again," he says mildly, scrolling.

Shane squints at his phone. "Who?"

"Montreal."

Shane blinks then barks out a laughs, "Oh my god. That's hilarious."

They don't start with a call or an apology or an acknowledgment of Shane's contribution.

No, they start with *interest*; Likes on old photos, A vague article about *unfinished business*, A beat reporter using the word *homecoming* like it hasn't already been poisoned. They don't come to Shane first, they go to the press, like they think peer pressure will make the offer taste sweeter.

Shane reads headlines aloud like he's doing a dramatic reading.

"Sources say the organization has grown," he says. "Grown what? Regret?"

Ilya hums. "They grow desperate."

The first email arrives a few days later.

Shane opens it, reads one sentence, and hands his phone to Ilya.

"They miss my leadership."

Ilya scrolls. "Do they miss apologizing?"

"Nope."

"Then," Ilya says, handing the phone back, "they miss the wrong thing."

Montreal escalates to an alarming degree. If Shane didn't know better, he'd think they actually wanted *him* back and not just the cup's he provided for them.

Private calls, followed by carefully worded leaks, culminating in a handwritten letter that arrives in Ottawa like it expects gratitude.

Shane opens it at the kitchen counter and dissolves into laughter.

"They offered you the bigger closet," he gasps.

Ilya blinks. "They think I am movable."

"They think shelving fixes homophobia," Shane wheezes. "I'm obsessed with how bad this is."

Ilya folds the letter neatly and drops it into recycling. "We are very happy," he says calmly. "Somewhere else."

Ottawa, for their part, does not flinch. They know what they have and they know how to protect their own. They don't issue statements, no grovelling post's declaring how much they love Shane, they don't advertise that Shane's happy with them, they just let the fact's speak for themselves.

They simply let him exist—loud, married, joyful—and the contrast does the work for them.

Montreal's locker room, however, implodes.

Voyagers Group Chat:

Jean-Luc: Ok, so this is officially bad right?

Marc: This feels worse than bad

Luc: The internet is calling it "aggressive flirting"

Antoine: They sent him a LETTER

Jean-Luc: I don't get why he won't even talk to management

Hayden: Because the last time he talked, they told him to make his marriage disappear.

Marc: That's not how it was meant—

Hayden: It's how it landed.

Antoine: They say they've changed

Hayden: Did they apologize?

Luc: ...

Hayden: Then no, they didn't.

The chat slows as they all sit with that. No one argues against, because how could they. They knew what they had done, knew that they acted horrifically towards a man who's only crime was falling in love.

They think back to the jokes, the comments, the way "professionalism" only ever applied in one direction.

Luc: He just tweeted again

Jean-Luc: I don't want to see it

Luc: "Funny how love is only 'unprofessional' when it's not straight."

Antoine: Oh.

Hayden: Correct.

Hayden Pike does not set out to become a problem.

He just answers a question honestly.

A reporter asks him what he thinks about Montreal trying to bring Shane back.

"You don't get to ask someone home," Hayden says calmly, "after you told them their life was inconvenient."

Twelve seconds.

That's all it takes.

Fans latch on immediately.

Finally someone said it.

Hayden Pike gets it.

Why didn't they listen to him earlier?

Montreal PR panics and plans are put in place. They couldn't have the best friend of the man they were courting back, publicly declare that he was right to leave. They shorten Hayden's interviews, they assign him a handler, slide him a list of "preferred phrasing." Hayden laughs and throws in the trash, but not before sending a picture to Shane, who responds with laughing emojis.

He's reminded of his talking points before every interview, gently guided to say "We're better now", but he can't bring himself to lie for them, for this team.

"So you want me to say we value inclusion," he asks politely, "without mentioning why Shane left."

"That's not—"

“That’s exactly it,” Hayden says. “And no.”

The rumors start after that, quiet at first, then louder, then a cacophony that Montreal has to reckon with.

Is Hayden Pike unhappy?

Could Montreal lose another star?

A reporter finally asks him outright if he’s considered a trade.

“I’ve thought about what kind of room I want to play in,” Hayden says evenly. “And what kind of values come with the jersey.”

That clip trends.

Again.

Ottawa calls two days later, they don’t promise glory or fancy deals. They don’t offer him the world on a silver platter; they offer him a home, a place where he can feel proud to wear the Jersey and know that they will stand together.

They promise respect.

Hayden asks one question.

“Is this real?”

“Yes,” they say.

He accepts.

Shane finds out when Ilya slides his phone across the counter.

“Your friend,” Ilya says. “He is coming.”

Shane freezes. “No.”

“Yes.”

Shane shrieks, actually shrieks, and launches himself across the kitchen.

“I WON,” he yells. “I WON EVERYTHING.”

Ilya smiles serenely. “You are very loud.”

The trade announcement detonates.

Montreal calls it *mutual*.

No one believes them.

Hayden posts one photo in red.

Caption:

Turns out culture isn't a buzzword.

Jackie likes it almost immediately.

That's enough.

The Ottawa locker room is chaos.

Shane tackles Hayden into a hug.

"You followed me," Shane laughs.

"You showed me where the door was," Hayden replies.

Ilya claps Hayden on the shoulder. "Correct choice."

Hayden exhales. "I feel lighter."

Then the schedule drops.

Ottawa.

Montreal.

Round one.

Shane makes a sound that shouldn't be human.

"Oh my god," he says. "Oh my *god*."

Ilya smiles slowly. "This is very funny."

Hayden closes his eyes. "You're going to be unbearable."

"Yes," Shane and Ilya say together.

They don't even pretend to tone it down.

They hold hands during warmups.

They share a water bottle.

Ilya kisses Shane's helmet on camera like it's muscle memory.

The internet combusts.

@HockeyStan: ARE THEY HOLDING HANDS IN THE PLAYOFFS

@QueerOnIce: THEY ARE MARRIED THIS IS LEGAL

@MontrealPain: WHY ARE THEY SMILING

Game One.

Montreal boos so hard the glass shakes.

Shane scores first.

He skates straight to Ilya.

Points at him.

Blows a kiss.

Ilya taps his helmet twice.

The replay loops endlessly.

@CentaurCore: That kiss was for the whole city

@VoyagersTherapy: I am unwell

Game Two.

Shane gets cross-checked.

Ilya appears instantly.

Not angry.

Protective.

Ilya scores later that shift.

Points at Shane.

Shane claps like a seal.

By Game Three, Montreal fans are chanting Shane's name by accident.

Someone throws a pride flag onto the ice.

Security panics.

The internet ascends.

Game Four.

Hayden scores in overtime.

Shane tackles him.

Ilya joins.

They end up in a pile.

The photo becomes history.

Game Six.

Empty net.

Shane passes instead of shooting.

Ilya scores.

Of course he does.

The handshake line is tense.

Shane is polite.

Ilya is calm.

Montreal avoids eye contact.

At the end, Shane skates straight to Ilya at the boards.

They hug.

Long, unapologetic, in front of millions on national television.

The internet detonates.

@HockeyTwitter: THIS WAS NEVER ABOUT HOCKEY

@QueerJoy: THEY WON WITH LOVE???

@MontrealAccountDeleted: I'm logging off forever

Later, in the locker room, Shane collapses into Ilya's arms, laughing breathlessly.

"Worth it," he says.

Ilya kisses his hair. "Always."

Hayden watches them, calm and certain.

"Thanks," he says. "For making it obvious."

Shane grins. "Anytime."

Montreal didn't lose Shane because of hockey.

They lost him because they asked him to be smaller.

Ottawa never did.

And now?

They're watching three men in red—happy, loud, unguarded—
—winning anyway.

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