

TELEVISION / DRAMA SHOWS

# Heated Rivalry Episode 4 Destroyed A Generation With A Single Needle-Drop

BY BJ COLANGELO / DEC. 12, 2025 5:00 PM EST



This article contains **major spoilers** for "Heated Rivalry" episode 4, "Rose."

Four episodes into "Heated Rivalry," the [must-watch queer hockey romance series from Crave Canada](#) that has burst in popularity stateside after it nabbed distribution on HBO Max, and this show has completely ripped me apart at the seams. I've been maintaining a "professional" and "nuanced" relationship as an entertainment critic with the adaptation of Rachel Reid's books for weeks, but the final 10 minutes of "Rose" shattered any hope of objectivity. The yearning between Canadian golden boy Shane Hollander (Hudson Williams) and Russia's own beautiful disaster Ilya Rozanov (Connor Storrie) has become a show that audiences are incapable of having any semblance of chill about (*myself included*). Still, the inclusion of [a single needle-drop](#) has seemingly pushed an entire generation over the edge.

Hollander and Rozanov are still sneaking across seasons to see each other, but something in their gravity has shifted. The heat is still molten, but after a rare stretch of domestic softness, Ilya finally lets himself be vulnerable — and Shane promptly panics and detonates it. A heartbroken Ilya storms into a club looking for anyone who isn't Shane, and as our ravishing Russian steps into the haze and lights, the crescendo of one of the most agonizing anthems ever written about forbidden love starts to play — "All the Things She Said" by t.A.T.u.

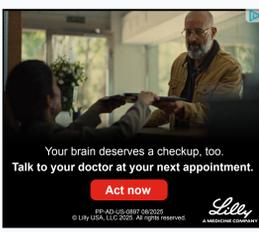


For a generation of queer viewers, the needle-drop was the sleeper-agent code word that unlocked every buried, brutal memory of realizing that you feel love and attraction in ways that the world will punish you for. And in a show already tormented with capturing both the beauty and brutality of that turmoil, underscoring it with t.A.T.u. felt like regressing us into a collective flashback.

## The layers of Heated Rivalry's t.A.T.u. needle drop



For the uninitiated, t.A.T.u. is the name of the Russian pop duo of Lena Katina and Julia Volkova, an abbreviation of "Та любит ту," roughly translating to "this girl loves that girl." The group was formed in 1999 when Katina and Volkova were 14 and 15 years old, but it exploded in popularity in 2002 with their single "All The Things She Said." An undeniable pop *banger*, the music video featured the two teenagers kissing in the rain behind a fence while people looked upon them with disdain. Something instantly shifted in the culture.



It didn't matter that [Katina and Volkova weren't actually a couple](#); the way they were censored across the globe echoed the way *actual* queer people were being censored, and their sheer existence empowered a generation to love out loud and scream "They're not gonna get us!" at the tops of our lungs.

The inclusion of "All the Things She Said" in "Heated Rivalry" is so much more than a catchy needle drop, because the context of the song's place in history and culture cannot be erased or undermined. It's something showrunner Jacob Tierney clearly understood, playing the song in its entirety before shifting into a club remix of it by the artist Harrison, with masculine vocals underscoring the unspoken thoughts and feelings of the characters staring each other down across the dance floor. How are any of us expected to have a normal thought when two men who are *clearly* in love but aren't allowed to be absorb each other's longing glances as "I feel totally lost," "Being with you has opened my eyes," "I keep closing my eyes, but I can't block you out," and "This is not enough" are pounding in our ears?

## Longing at the club is a queer rite of passage



Queer media fans quickly pointed out that this club scene recalls season 3, episode 3 of the Norwegian teen drama series "SKAM." There, the characters Even (Henrik Holm) and Isak (Tarjei Sandvik Moe) attend a neon party, dancing and making out with other people despite their feelings for each other, and ultimately locking eyes as Robyn's "Call Your Girlfriend" plays. Similar scenes have wound up in shows like "Young Royals" and "The Sex Lives of College Girls," but for this writer, in particular, it evokes the feelings I had when I first saw [the seminal sapphic classic "But I'm a Cheerleader"](#), wherein Natasha Lyonne's Megan and Clea DuVall's Graham sneak away from conversion therapy camp to a gay bar and ... dance with girls that aren't each other while Saint Etienne's "We're in the City" plays.

Tierney had long excelled at visual storytelling with music (see: any "Letterkenny" fight scene or extended hockey scene on "Shoresy"), but "[Heated Rivalry](#)" [takes things to a new level](#). Once the song hit, I was overwhelmed by my own Pavlovian response to it, with all of the repressed emotions from being "all mixed up, feeling cornered and rushed" in 2003, praying that my parents wouldn't see the music video that had enraptured me, knowing full well that the feelings I had about other girls were a bad thing. The strategic lyric placement Tierney aligns with the scene's blocking (drenched in bisexual lightning, no less) only exacerbates things. I've been out publicly for so long that I had almost forgotten what it feels like to be overwhelmed with fear and shame like Shane and Ilya, but t.A.T.u. was here to remind me.

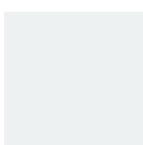
"Heated Rivalry" is available on Crave and HBO Max. New episodes drop Fridays.



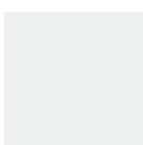
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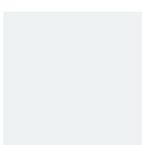
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