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Heated Rivalry: Hudson thought Connor would 'pin me down and f — me' in audition

Heated Rivalry actors Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie break down their hot chemistry test during an interview with *Out*.



Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov; Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander on *Heated Rivalry*./ HBO Max/Crave Canada



By Bernardo Sim
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Accept

Jacob Tierney.

In an interview with *Out*, the showrunner and lead actors discuss the show's audition process, chemistry

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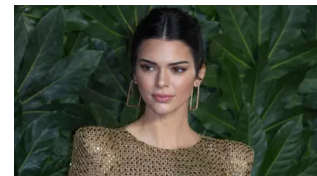
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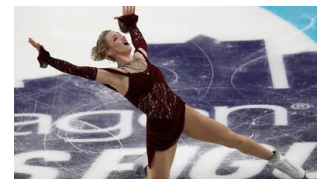
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test, and respective journeys to falling in love with these characters along the way.

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Storrie, who plays Ilya on *Heated Rivalry*, tells *Out*, "Hudson was the third actor that I read with. The first two I was like, 'Okay, this is cool,' and then Hudson came on. Jacob [showrunner] actually texted me directly and was like, 'What do you think?' And I was like, 'Yeah, Hudson, for sure.' Instantly."

"I read with one other possible Ilya, and it was good," Williams, who plays Shane, says. "But something about Connor... There was an inexplicable X-factor that just felt realer than what I thought it could possibly be. And that was *something*. I had a quote I told Jacob, at one point, about my read with Connor in particular. [To Jacob] Do you know it?"

Tierney replies, "I do, but are we going to say it out loud?"

"I don't remember the exact quote," Williams explains, referencing something that he said after doing a chemistry test with Storrie. "Can you say it for me?"

The *Heated Rivalry* showrunner says, "Hudson told me, 'The other guy was good, but Connor felt like he was going to pin me down and fuck me.'"



Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov and Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander on *Heated Rivalry*.

/HBO Max/Crave Canada

"Damn! Is that what it is?!" Storrie reacts, seemingly hearing that story for the first time.

Tierney nods, "That is literally what he said. And I was like, 'Well, I think I cast this right.'"

That, he did. As showrunner, Tierney focused the casting process of Shane and Ilya on finding a duo that [played well together and had chemistry](#) — even if other actors also did great in their auditions for *Heated Rivalry*.

"They were essentially cast at the same time. It was very clear to us that we needed to find Shane and Ilya together," Tierney tells *Out*. "This show lives and dies with them, so we needed to make sure that this worked together. There are terrific actors who are in, you know... They're just in different shows. You need to find the people who are going to be together in the same show, and that's what the two of them had quite instantly."



Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander and Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov on *Heated Rivalry*.

/HBO Max/Crave Canada

When asked about getting to know their respective characters on *Heated Rivalry*, Hudson says that he "fell in love with Shane immediately. I mean, I was falling in love with him even when I read the sides, which were just the audition... like, two scenes I got for the audition. By the time I finished reading episode 6, I was crying. I felt like no one else was allowed to play him. I needed to play him."

"Shane is very affable, even though he's sort of a departure from myself. As much anxiety as I have, Shane has quadruple, tenfold more, and it's just pouring out of him at all times," Williams adds. "And that was fun to play, even if sometimes my stomach hurt. I always thought of him as sort of this pretty, neurotic character; this little concoction of this flowery, determined, sort of alpha in some ways — or sort of wanting to appear so — and then just this pretty little sensitive painting in other ways."



Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander on *Heated Rivalry*.
/HBO Max/Crave Canada

Storrie jokes that, much like Williams' experience with Shane, he also thought Ilya was a "pretty little flower who..." But before he can even finish that sentence, the actor breaks into laughter, unable to keep a straight face given that he was describing the cocky hockey player he's brought to life.

"In order for us to believe these two people together, we have to really believe them alone. And there's so much crazy stuff that happens in Ilya's life that I was like... I mean, it's all there," Storrie notes, not joking this time around. "It's about really believing in those scenarios in order to make something cool happen. Also, selfishly, I just love Russian language. I love any opportunity to do an accent, learn a new skill, and this had all of it."

The actor also enjoyed that the production was set in Canada. "That was one of the cool things about this project, getting out of L.A. for a few months."



Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov during a shower scene on *Heated Rivalry*.
/HBO Max/Crave Canada

Did Williams and Storrie read Rachel Reid's original novels before playing their respective characters on the *Heated Rivalry* TV show?

"Not before auditioning," Storrie replies. "I read Jacob's scripts first. Once we went further in the audition process, I got all six episodes. But before we started filming, I finished the first book involving Shane and Ilya."

Williams adds, "Me too. And I didn't want to read *The Long Game*, yet, while filming. I didn't want to know what happened to them yet. I wanted to sort of play it as I go. So I saved that for right after we finished. But I had *Heated Rivalry* read, and then read again, and annotated many times, on my Kindle."

***Heated Rivalry* drops new episodes every Friday via streaming on [HBO Max](#).**

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