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Heated Rivalry author Rachel Reid: 'Shane is our hero' in the trilogy

Author of the popular queer romance novels discusses Unrivaled, the upcoming next chapter for Shane and Ilya

By Bernardo Sim
Feb 20, 2026

Editor's note: This interview was recorded prior to Rachel Reid's announcement delaying her upcoming novel Unrivaled to June 1, 2027 due to worsening Parkinson's disease symptoms via Instagram video.

Rachel Reid tells OUT that her upcoming novel Unrivaled — a sequel novel to Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov's love story told in the *Heated Rivalry* trilogy — is "Shane's story" and that Hollander fitters's arc as "the main character of these three books."

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When concreting the serious romance that reignit the *Heated Rivalry* novel as "Shane's book" and *The Long Game* novel as "Ilya's book," and discussing the upcoming novel Unrivaled as "Shane's book" and Unrivaled, Reid makes the case as to why this is true (Shane's story) all along.

"I do think that the three books, as a trilogy, it's Shane who has the hero's arc," Reid says. "I think, even in The Long Game, it's Shane. As I wrote that book, I realized that Shane was the hero of that story. I don't think that continues into the one (Unrivaled). I don't think Shane sort of is the main character of these three books. It's pretty even, I think, it fits pretty evenly into the three books, but I think Shane is the hero of the trilogy. It's probably a little more even than the other ones. But, ultimately, Shane is (at fault)."

Author Rachel Reid (Rachel Reid/Instagram)
Courtesy Rachel Reid

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As the author responsible for bringing Shane and Ilya to life when they first meet at age 21 in *Heated Rivalry* through both being 26 in *The Long Game* ends, Reid is excited to write about these characters entering their 30s and beyond. "I'm very excited to write about these characters growing up right where The Long Game left off, so they're only 30" when the book begins, she says.

"I think, because I'm a hockey mom, I'm a hockey player, I'm a hockey player. So, yeah, it's been fun kind of writing them — especially Shane, because I'm a hockey player, I'm a hockey player, I'm a hockey player. You know, the body's gonna start to not do what it used to do."

The writer goes on, "I think having them at an age where maybe they're starting to think about the future, beyond hockey, and that lives together, is nice. It's a very different vibe from writing them in their teens and early 20s and now they're thinking about different things, usually, when they're into their 30s."

Author Rachel Reid (Rachel Reid/Instagram)
Courtesy Rachel Reid

Unrivaled is the seventh installment in Reid's sexy Game Changers book series that also explores other love stories between Canadian Scott Hunter and Ilja Dosky — played by actors Florians Arnaud and Robbie Gibbons in the HBO Max series *Heated Rivalry* — and romantic pairs such as Shane and Fabian, Eric and Ilja, Troy and Harry.

"A line has been drawn — and the hockey world is divided," the official Unrivaled synopsis reveals. "Scott Hunter, the NHL's most celebrated hockey rookie, lays Russian and Shane Hollander have nothing in title. For more than a decade, they kept their love a secret, but now they're out, and everyone's keeping on the same team. The support is incredible. Most of the time."

Unrivaled is available for preorder on Hachette, Indigo, Amazon, and everywhere else books are sold.

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Nicholas Galitzine and Taylor Zakhar Perez as Alex Claremont-Diaz and Henry Fox-Mountbatten, the starring pairing in Amazon MGM's Red, White & Royal Blue, Courtesy of Amazon MGM Studios

Red, White & Royal Wedding — the sequel to Prime Video's 2023 queer rom-com Red, White & Royal Blue — just got a huge update its lead actors Taylor Zakhar Perez and Nicholas Galitzine, who played love interests Alex Claremont-Diaz and Prince Henry of the United States and Prince Henry, respectively, in Red, White & Royal Blue, in the live-action film adaptation of Casey McQuiston's 2019 novel of the same name. Keep Reading >>

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Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov and Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander, on Heated Rivalry season 1, HBO Max/Crave Canada

Ilya's original novel loves the characters into their corners. Shane is the "pretty" boy who is "like a doe," naturally "around" and "like a swimmer." Ilya is "massive" and "big" and has a "muscular chest," "muscular arms" and "thick, muscular thighs." Keep Reading >>

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By Nick Mathew Jan 01, 2026

Getty and Photo-graphic Nick Mathew, Nick Mathew

Eighteen months ago, when I first announced my book deal on LinkedIn, I was met with your typical batch of finance bro haters. It knows, I know — mistake number one was bringing up LinkedIn in the first place. Keep Reading >>

Heated Rivalry sequel Unrivaled officially announced: Story, release date, and more

By Bernardo Sim Jan 12, 2026

Connor Storrie (L) as Ilya Rozanov and Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander, on Heated Rivalry, Thomas Jerkin, Courtesy Rachel Reid's Unrivaled cover, HBO Max/Crave Canada, Courtesy Rachel Reid

It's official. The unrivaled sequel to Heated Rivalry — book 7 in the Game Changers series of novels that will once again center the love story between Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov — has been announced by author Rachel Reid today. Keep Reading >>

Heated Rivalry book sequel Unrivaled by Rachel Reid: What we know (so far)

By Bernardo Sim Jan 12, 2026

Robbie Gibbons as Scott Hunter, Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander, Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov, in the Heated Rivalry TV show (Left to Right) Robbie Gibbons, Hudson Williams, Connor Storrie, HBO Max/Crave Canada, Courtesy Rachel Reid's Unrivaled cover, Rachel Reid

Heated Rivalry's Unrivaled queer hockey players Ilya Rozanov (played by Connor Storrie) and Shane Hollander (played by Hudson Williams) are reportedly getting a new book about their love story, reportedly titled Unrivaled. Fans of the TV series, which would be book 7 within the overall Game Changers series of novels, Keep Reading >>

Gregory Maguire's 'Wicked' novel reportedly banned in Utah—full list here

By Bernardo Sim Jan 06, 2026

Gregory Maguire's Wicked The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West book cover, Cynthia Gregory Maguire at the Gilman Sex Gallerhouse, publicity photo © Gary Ng / CC-BY, Flickr/Wikimedia, Jim Kazanjian/AP/Image

Utah officials have ordered Gregory Maguire's novel Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West to be pulled from all public school libraries, according to a Friday, January 2, 2026 Associated Press report. Wicked is a prequel to the L. Frank Baum classic children's novel The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, and its sequel Wicked: The Sorcerer's Apprentice, which was released in 2009, is a sequel to the Wicked series. It also is a controversial education text and its movie-TV, 20 Genuine Material Review Nonetheless, Keep Reading >>

'Heated Rivalry' author Rachel Reid breaks silence on discourse of her sexuality

By Bernardo Sim Jan 12, 2026

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Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander and Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov on *Heated Rivalry* episode 6; Rachel Reid, author of the *Game Changers* book series, during the premiere of the *Heated Rivalry* TV show at TIFF | *LgBtoo on November 28, 2024* / Crave Canada/HBO Max; Harold Ferng/Getty Images.

Rachel Reid, author of the Game Changers series of novels that inspired the Heated Rivalry TV show starring Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander and Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov, has broken her silence on fans who speculated about her own sexuality and whether she would "have the right to write" these books about male hockey players who are gay/bisexual/queer and in the closet. Keep Reading →

Heated Rivalry rules Anderson Cooper and Andy Cohen's 2026 NYE special

By Nicole Ortiz Jan 01, 2026

Andy Cohen and Anderson Cooper during the 2026 telecast of New Year's Eve Live on CNN; Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov and Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander on *Heated Rivalry* / CNN; HBO Max/Crave Canada

Plus, Stephen Colbert is a "Dorky bottom," Brandi Carlile is losing sleep over Heated Rivalry, and Connor Storrie's ass as Ilya Rozanov sets a new standard. Keep Reading →

For her next act, Lydia B Kollins flips 'Drag Race' on its head — again

By Nicole Ortiz Dec 30, 2025

Lydia B Kollins and Ava Grace in promotional image for Lydia Lydia Lydia: A Collection of Photographs, along with drawings and images from inside the book; / Courtesy of Lydia B Kollins and Ava Grace Studios; center photo by Gary Bunger

Lydia Lydia Lydia: A Collection of Photographs is an immersive, ingenious, and iconic book that documents the Drag Race star's inimitable breakout year. Keep Reading →

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By Nicole Ortiz Dec 30, 2025

Nick Wolny/ Cameron Thrower (@cameronx)

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Heated Rivalry episode 6: Book ending changes and new finale scenes

By Nicole Ortiz Dec 29, 2025

Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov and Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander on *Heated Rivalry* episode 6; HBO Max/Crave Canada

Breaking down the major changes on Heated Rivalry episode 6 compared to the original book ending. Keep Reading →

Heated Rivalry actors, characters, and gay storylines (updated guide)

By Nicole Ortiz Dec 26, 2025

Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov and Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander on *Heated Rivalry* season 1 episode 5; HBO Max/Crave Canada

The icy and extra spicy Crave/HBO Max series Heated Rivalry has had fans losing their minds over weekly new episodes from this epic, slow-to-boom hockey romance saga that quickly became the gay internet's greatest obsession. Keep Reading →

Pedro Pascal loves 'Heated Rivalry' just like us, by the way

By Nicole Ortiz Dec 22, 2025

Pedro Pascal at a promotional event for *Eddington* during the 76th annual Cannes Film Festival in May 2023; Connor Storrie and Hudson Williams on *Heated Rivalry* / Gareth Cattermole/Getty Images; HBO Max/Crave Canada

In case you didn't know, Pedro Pascal has been starring Heated Rivalry just like the rest of us, and fandoms for both the actor and the Crave/HBO Max series are now cracking his sweet and hilarious reactions to social media posts about the gay hockey show that's taken over the world. Keep Reading →

Love 'Heated Rivalry'? Watch these 9 great queer shows next

By Kip Gray Dec 19, 2025

Overcompensating, *Heated Rivalry*, *A League of Their Own*/ Prime Video/LA; HBO Max/Crave Canada; Amazon Studios

If you love seeing queer people in sports, you should add these TV shows to your watch list. Keep Reading →

Heated Rivalry: Scott Hunter and Kip Grady's relationship timeline

By Nicole Ortiz Dec 19, 2025

François Arnaud as Scott Hunter, Robbie Dé as Kip Grady on *Heated Rivalry* / HBO Max/Crave Canada

Editor's note: This article contains spoilers for Heated Rivalry season 1 episode 5, titled "I'll Believe in Anything," now streaming on HBO Max. Keep Reading →

Netflix's 'Boots' is canceled: Stars react to the heartbreaking news

By Nicole Ortiz Dec 17, 2025

Dick Cameron Kaiz, Sachin Bhuth, Miles Heizer, Max Parker, Angus O'Brien on *Boots*/ Netflix

The cast and crew are sharing reactions to Boots season 2 not happening. Keep Reading →

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