

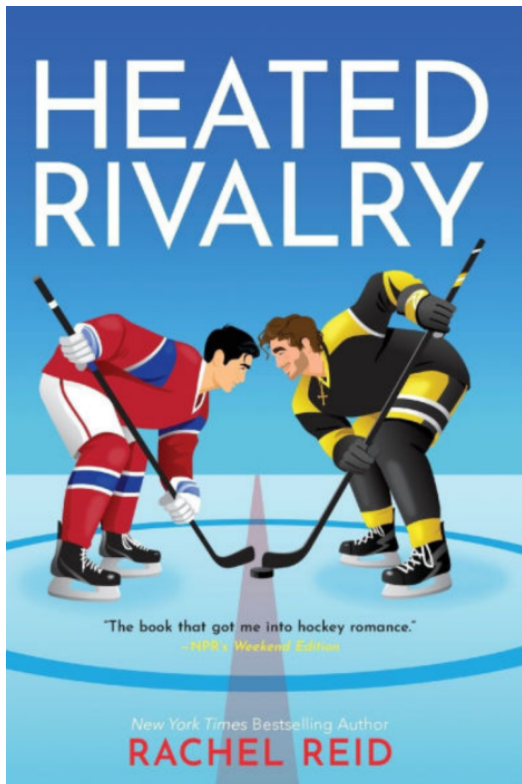


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'Heated Rivalry' is a hit, but author Rachel Reid is trying to maintain her normalcy amidst the phenomenon

"It feels like I found a genie and wished for the world to be obsessed with everything I wrote."

By [Samantha Mangino](#) on April 23, 2026



We sat down with Rachel Reid at BookCon 2026. Credit: Caleb Latreille / Harlequin

On April 12, I attended the PWHL game at TD Garden in Boston between the Boston Fleet and the Montreal Victoire. The *Heated Rivalry* effect was inescapable. It was an opportunity for hockey fans to turn out their favorite merch — someone in my row excitedly ran toward the crowd cameras to show off her ['I'm coming to the cottage'](#) T-shirt. *Heated Rivalry* actor Ksenia Daniela Kharlamova was in the crowd, and the cheers that ensued when she appeared on the screen made you think one of the teams had scored a goal. And when the *Heated Rivalry* look-a-like contest winners shared a kiss on the jumbotron while [t.A.T.u's "All the Things She Said"](#) played, it caused the 17,000-person crowd to collectively lose their minds.

Since [HBO Max's *Heated Rivalry*](#) premiered in November 2025, actors Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie, as well as their characters Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov, have become household names. But so has Rachel Reid. The author of *Heated Rivalry* and the *Game Changer* series, of which it's a part, has always had a loyal fan base, but now that the show is a global hit, it reaches far beyond the scope of the show and books.

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BookCon 2026 marked the first big event for Reid since the [Heated Rivalry adaptation](#), and fans came ready to celebrate and meet their [favorite author](#). I sat down with Reid to chat about fandom and maintaining a sense of normalcy amidst the phenomenon.

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Rachel Reid kicked off BookCon 2026 with "Heated Rivalry" show creator, Jacob Tierney. Credit: Samantha Mangino / Mashable

Samantha Mangino: What's it like meeting fans at BookCon?

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Rachel Reid: It's been great. For the last few years, more and more people have been wanting to meet me at these kinds of events. Even before the show [HBO Max's *Heated*

Rivalry], it was already pretty surreal and overwhelming, but in a really good way. Now with the show, it's really exploded. I mean, I'm doing a photo line. That kind of thing makes you feel like you're in a Marvel movie.

SM: You said during your panel yesterday that authors aren't supposed to be seen like this, so I imagine it feels unbelievable to have all the eyes on you.

RR: Getting recognized all over New York, too, is a pretty wild feeling as an author. I've been getting like drive-by, "I love you, Rachels," and people on the street recognizing me. As an author, that's very odd. I think even the biggest authors on earth don't get recognized that often. We're just not seen that often.

SM: I think it really speaks to the show's popularity.

RR: Yeah, with all the promo the show has gotten, and everybody who made the show has been fantastic about including me in that, and that's been the difference maker.

SM: How do you feel life has changed since the show came out?

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RR: I have to be a little more aware that things I say might become headlines. I can't just make flippant jokes. Things I share tend to get shared, so maybe I don't post as often. I'm also aware that people could be photographing or video recording me at any time. So I'm a little more careful there, although not as careful as I should be. I'm still getting used to that.

Obviously, my career has leveled up many, many levels very quickly. I feel like I've skipped steps somewhere. I had a list of goals that I checked off all at once. So now it's about thinking ahead and rethinking my goals.

SM: Have you been online, kind of watching the fandom explode?

RR: Not that much. I try to stay out of fan spaces generally, and I did that before the show, too, but certainly since the show, and my [new book was announced](#). I've stayed away from like Reddit. I'm not on Threads, I haven't been on Twitter in years. I haven't been on Goodreads in years. I just use Instagram. I think it creates a nice barrier. I do have friends, so if I see hints of things happening on Threads, I'll be like, "Can you explain this to me?" I'm not gonna look myself.

SM: Are there any other boundaries you've created online?

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RR: Definitely, I don't want anybody giving me ideas for the book. That's a big one. Obviously, I don't read fan fiction because that would not be a good idea.

I try to make myself a little less accessible than I used to be, and sometimes I feel bad about it, but it's just necessary. I do have kids, and I'm trying to maintain our privacy as much as possible. It helps that I live in Nova Scotia, Canada, which is not a big or fancy place. So when I'm home, my life doesn't feel that different. When I travel for things like this [BookCon], I get to face it.

SM: What's it been like gaining so many new fans since the show aired?

RR: It's been wild to see how Ilya and Shane have become household names. My characters went from having a small but loyal fan base, which was lovely too, but now everybody I've ever known knows these characters and has opinions about them. It feels like I found a genie and wished for the world to be obsessed with everything I wrote.

Everyone is so into these characters, and I think it speaks to how amazing a job Jacob [Tierney] and everyone involved did making the show.

It's a beautiful show, and I'm not surprised that people like it as much as they do, but I certainly didn't think it would find such a wide audience. There's something about the timing of it, and I think what people are craving too, that just made it all click.

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People have told me it has changed their relationships with coworkers, neighbors, and even some relatives, because they didn't think they could be open about who they are with these people. Still, then, because they're such big fans of the show, they thought maybe it would be OK if I told them a little more about myself. Places feel a little safer than they did before.

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Samantha Mangino
Shopping Reporter

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Boston-based Shopping Reporter, Samantha Mangino, covers all things tech at Mashable, rounding up the best products and deals. She's covered commerce for three years, spending extensive time testing and reviewing all things home, including couches, steam irons, and washing machines. She thoroughly vets products and internet trends, finding out if those cozy gamer chairs are really as comfortable as TikTok claims.



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