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‘Heated Rivalry’ Author Tells Podcaster Nicole Byer How She Got Her Start in Steamy Hockey Romance—And It’s Pretty Saucy

It’s also how she met her husband.

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By Esther Carlstone



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Rachel Reid, author of the viral Heated Rivalry series, opened up on Nicole Byer's podcast about her fearless burlesque past and how it shaped her steamy novels.

Photo by Harold Feng on Getty Images

Key Points

- Rachel Reid's burlesque background inspired her successful hockey romance novels.
- Her Heated Rivalry series became a hit HBO Max adaptation with 10 million viewers.
- Reid's books have sold over 1.3 million copies; a third installment arrives in 2027.

Rachel Reid's journey to becoming one of the hottest romance authors on the [planet](#) started in a pretty unexpected place: a burlesque troupe in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The author of the wildly successful [Heated Rivalry series](#) appeared on the latest episode of comedian Nicole Byer's podcast "Why Won't You Date Me?" and opened up about her colorful past, her enduring marriage, and how

she ended up writing steamy hockey romance novels that have now been adapted into [a blockbuster HBO Max series](#) the world can't seem to get enough of.

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The origin story alone is worth the listen. Reid met her husband Matt while [performing in a burlesque show](#)—he was the keyboard player, and she had the car. “We met doing burlesque together,” Reid told Byer. She performed under the name “Misconduct” and specialized in sports-themed comedy acts, a precursor to her books, perhaps?

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"I was named Misconduct, and I did sports and largely hockey-themed stripping and comedy stuff and some music," Reid explained. One particularly memorable act involved coming out in full borrowed hockey "attire" that was, well, less than fresh. "For one of my acts, I did, and I borrowed it from a guy, and it smelled so bad. I went down to pasties, I think."

The smell of hockey gear became something of a running theme in the conversation—one that Reid clearly has strong opinions about. "It's the worst smell. I don't think there's a worse smell than hockey gear," she said, and Byer was quick to agree. What Reid didn't mention in her books, she revealed on the podcast: "They smell bad, so bad."

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From Burlesque to Bestseller

The burlesque experience stuck with Reid. Years later, she'd draw from that saucy experience when writing her hockey romance series, starting with *Game Changer* in 2018 and *Heated Rivalry* in 2019. The books languished in relative obscurity until a television adaptation debuted on HBO Max in November 2025, taking the series—and its fictional stars, Shane and Ilya—completely viral.

Now, with the show averaging 10 million viewers per episode and Reid's books selling more than 1.3 million copies, the author's life has transformed completely. A highly anticipated third book in the Shane and Ilya saga arrives in 2027—and fans are already counting down the days.

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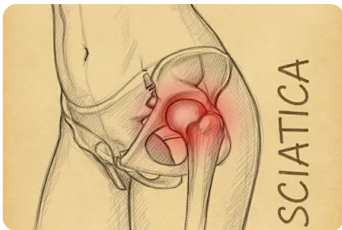
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