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COLD OPEN

‘Heated Rivalry’ Annotated Scripts Reveal How Shane and Ilya’s First Meeting Was Actually Supposed to Happen

TODAY.com has an exclusive first look at “I’ll Believe In Anything: The Making of Heated Rivalry Season 1,” which features the hit show’s scripts with annotations from creator Jacob Tierney.

Oct. 7, 2026, 9:45 AM EDT / Source: TODAY

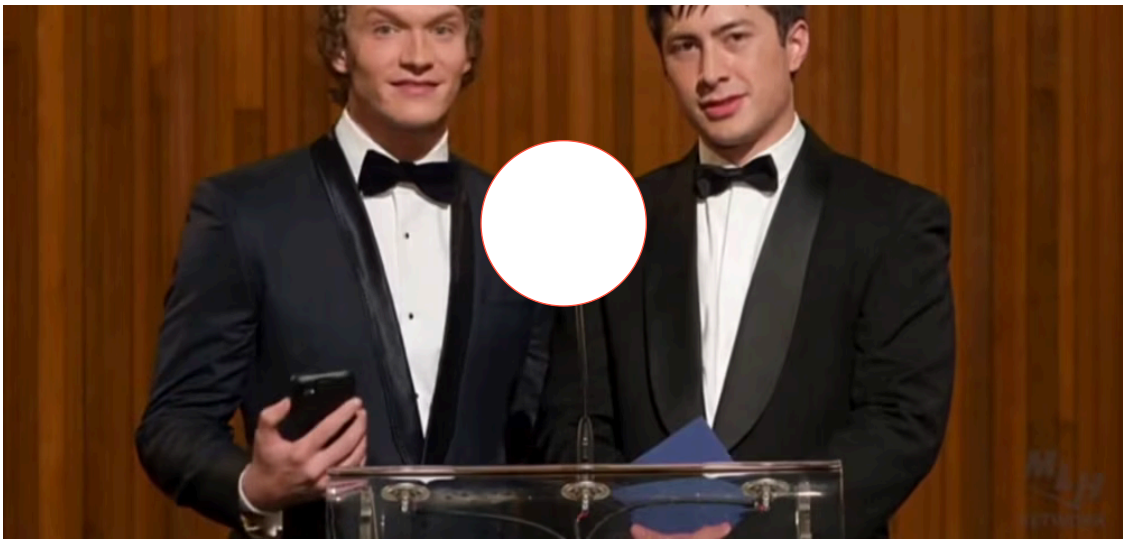


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'Heated Rivalry' Season 2 Officially Begins Filming

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It is a truth universally acknowledged that a good story starts with a good first line. In TODAY's "Cold Open," authors tease their buzzy upcoming release by revealing and explaining its first line, paragraph or page.

The pivotal first scene of the TV adaptation of "Heated Rivalry," in which hockey stars Shane and Ilya meet for the very first time, was written and filmed to be way longer than what viewers saw in the final cut.

TODAY.com has an exclusive first look at "I'll Believe in Anything," a book about the making of Season 1 of "Heated Rivalry," featuring scripts annotated by the show's creator, writer and director, Jacob Tierney.

In an excerpt of the script, Tierney reveals that the first scene of the show — about a minute long in the episode's final cut — was originally written to be up to six minutes. It sees a teenage Shane Hollander, played by Hudson Williams, introduce himself to another junior hockey prodigy, Ilya Rozanov, played by Connor Storrie, at a junior hockey tournament in Regina, Saskatchewan.

Fans of the show know that their meeting sets in motion a yearslong secret romantic tryst, occurring in the background of their respective rises through the ranks of professional hockey.



Connor Storrie and Hudson Williams as Ilya and Shane in "Heated Rivalry."

The scene starts with Shane awkwardly approaching Ilya outside a rink while the latter smokes a cigarette. In the final cut of Episode 1, they only exchange a few words. The two shake hands, Shane comments on the "no smoking" sign above Ilya's head before calling the Russian "an awesome player to watch." The teens taunt each other briefly before Shane heads inside.

But the annotated script reveals that their first conversation was much more substantial, with plenty of teasing.

"This was shot exactly as scripted, and then we cut it down," Tierney writes. "Our editor Arthur Tarnowski would present an option of what a scene looks like at a minute and a half, or three minutes, six minutes, or whatever it was."

The cut dialogue begins with Shane asking Ilya if his parents are at the tournament. After he answers no, Shane says, "That must suck. With Christmas and all."

"Christmas is later in Russia," Ilya says.

Awkward silence continues to ensure, and Shane finally breaks it by commenting on how next year's event will occur in his hometown of Ottawa, Canada.

"Is Ottawa more exciting?" Ilya responds, after the stage directions note he "can't help but smirk a bit at Shane's nerves."

After "they both kind of smile at each other," Ilya makes the next remark, asking if Shane's parents are with him.

"Yeah, they try to come to most of my games," Shane says.

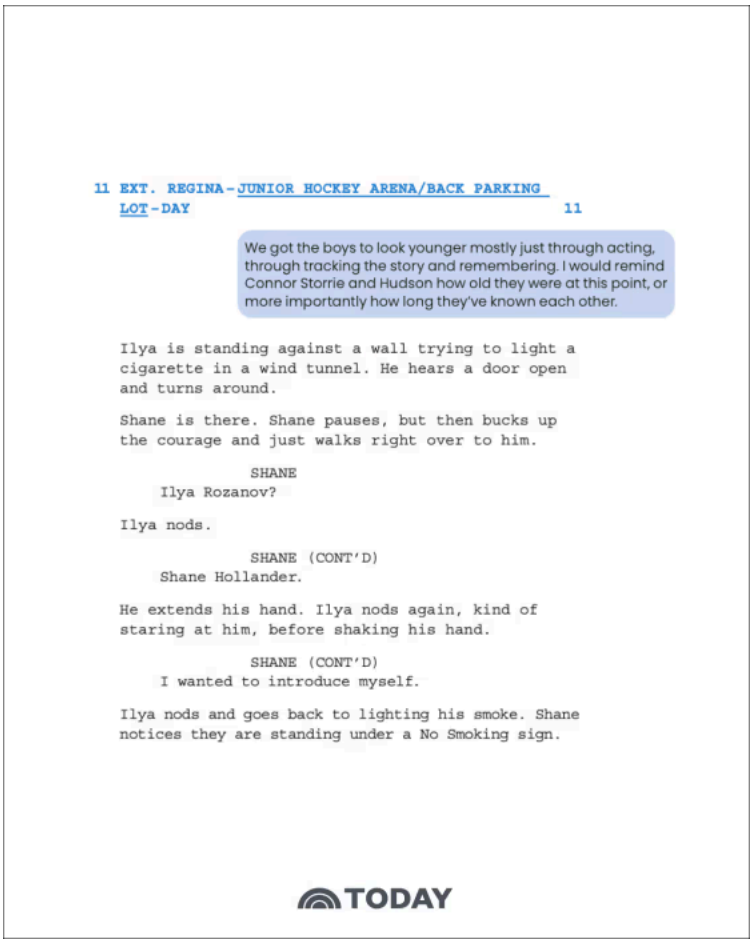
"Nice for you," Ilya responds.

Tierney also describes his goal for how he wanted Shane and Ilya to come across to viewers in this first scene. He writes he wanted to show a "charming formality to Shane."

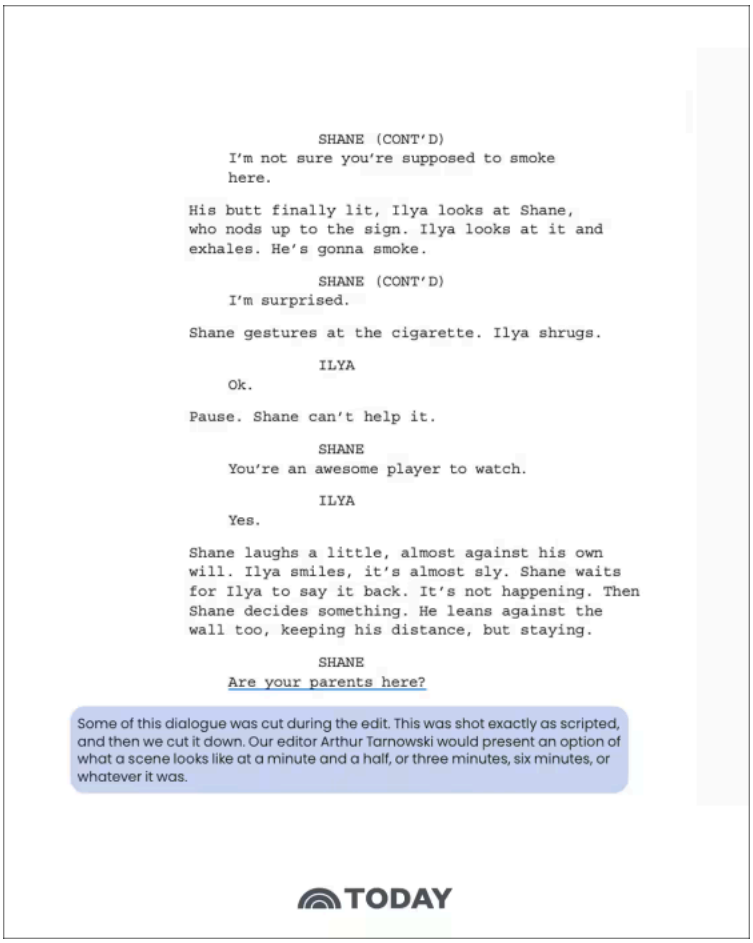
"He's trying to be a good sport and wants to introduce himself, and he has a bit of awkward-dad energy," Tierney writes in the annotations.

Of Ilya, he adds, "I wanted people to watch Ilya go from suspicious to quite playful, to show that playfulness would come. It would be a hallmark of his personality."

Read the full annotated scripts below.



Jacob Tierney / Courtesy Little, Brown and Company



SHANE (CONT'D)
I'm not sure you're supposed to smoke here.

His butt finally lit, Ilya looks at Shane, who nods up to the sign. Ilya looks at it and exhales. He's gonna smoke.

SHANE (CONT'D)
I'm surprised.

Shane gestures at the cigarette. Ilya shrugs.

ILYA
Ok.

Pause. Shane can't help it.

SHANE
You're an awesome player to watch.

ILYA
Yes.

Shane laughs a little, almost against his own will. Ilya smiles, it's almost sly. Shane waits for Ilya to say it back. It's not happening. Then Shane decides something. He leans against the wall too, keeping his distance, but staying.

SHANE
Are your parents here?

Some of this dialogue was cut during the edit. This was shot exactly as scripted, and then we cut it down. Our editor Arthur Tarnowski would present an option of what a scene looks like at a minute and a half, or three minutes, six minutes, or whatever it was.

TODAY

Jacob Tierney / Little, Brown and Company

60%

ILYA
No.

SHANE
Oh. That must suck. With Christmas and all.

ILYA
Christmas is later in Russia.

SHANE
Oh. Cool.

Another long, cold moment. Shane shivers.

SHANE (CONT'D)
It's cold, right?

ILYA
Yes.

Shane can barely look at him, but Ilya can't help but keep glancing at Shane. Silence. Shane tries yet again but:

SHANE
Ottawa next year.

This was quite a long scene as it was originally scripted, and then Arthur and I decided together how to cut back.

He looks at Ilya, Ilya looks at him, but says nothing.

SHANE (CONT'D)
My hometown. And the International Prospect Cup. I mean, next year the International Prospect Cup will be in my hometown. Which is Ottawa.

Ilya can't help but smirk a bit at Shane's nerves.

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Jacob Tierney / Courtesy Little, Brown and Company

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ILYA
Is Ottawa more exciting?

Shane looks at him and laughs, relieved, a bit off the hook.

SHANE
Than here? I don't know, not really. It's just as stupid cold too.

They both kind of smile at each other.

ILYA
Your parents are here?

SHANE
Yeah, they try to come to most of my games.

ILYA
Nice for you.

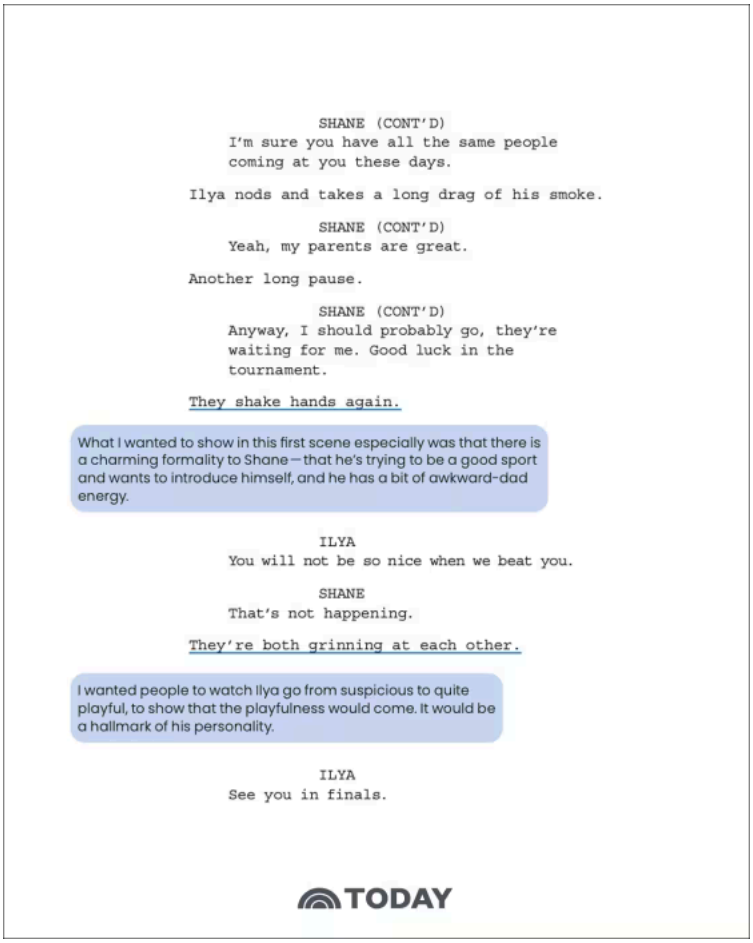
SHANE
My mom is-kind of my manager, or something? Like with endorsements and that stuff.

Ilya raises his eyebrows-it's hard to tell if he's fake impressed, or really impressed. Shane blushes.

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Jacob Tierney / Courtesy Little, Brown and Company

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SHANE (CONT'D)
I'm sure you have all the same people coming at you these days.

Ilya nods and takes a long drag of his smoke.

SHANE (CONT'D)
Yeah, my parents are great.

Another long pause.

SHANE (CONT'D)
Anyway, I should probably go, they're waiting for me. Good luck in the tournament.

They shake hands again.

What I wanted to show in this first scene especially was that there is a charming formality to Shane — that he's trying to be a good sport and wants to introduce himself, and he has a bit of awkward-dad energy.

ILYA
You will not be so nice when we beat you.

SHANE
That's not happening.

They're both grinning at each other.

I wanted people to watch Ilya go from suspicious to quite playful, to show that the playfulness would come. It would be a hallmark of his personality.

ILYA
See you in finals.

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Jacob Tierney / Courtesy Little, Brown and Company

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Maddie Ellis

Maddie Ellis is a trending editor at TODAY Digital.

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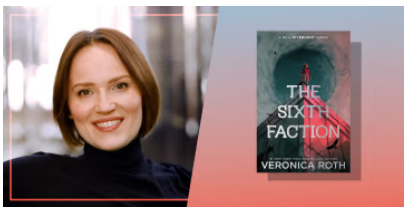
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