A Boring Hockey Book

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/75182421.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Post-Canon, Established Relationship, outsider pov, a dash of real hockey rpf as a treat, the author gets meta about hockey romance and hrpf
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-03 Words: 2,452 Chapters: 1/1

A Boring Hockey Book

by notlayingroses

Summary

Ilya swings by a local bookstore in Edmonton to get a boring hockey book for Shane, and is delighted to get recommendations for sexy gay hockey books.

Notes

my qualifications for writing this is that I've been a bookseller for five years. When I had the idea for this fic, where Ilya goes book shopping for Shane, I quickly realized that it would be just the reheated nachos of a hockey rpf fic I've already posted where Connor McDavid is a bookseller in an alternate universe. And then I was like. Well, if it's an alternate universe, who's to say it couldn't be the GCU? So I am reheating my own nachos of fanfiction and making fictional Connor McDavid a bookseller that talks to Ilya Rozanov. The realities of hockey rpf and not NOT hockey rpf are folding in on themselves. Personally, it delights me. Probably one of the most self indulgent fics I've ever written, but that's why we come to ao3 dot com, for self indulgence.

See the end of the work for more notes

Connor was, objectively, not having a good day so far. He'd woken up late, was out of his favorite coffee creamer, and was nearly late to work. And when he *got* to work, his coworker had called out sick, so he had to open the bookstore by himself. It wasn't a particularly large bookstore, so it could be done, but Connor rarely ever worked the opening shift. He was normally on closing duty, so he wasn't as familiar with the opening tasks, and kept misplacing his keys. And *because* Darnell had called out, he had twice as much work that he should be doing in the shop. And *if* he couldn't find someone to replace Darnell's evening shift, then *Connor* would have to cover for him, and then he might potentially miss the game.

The Game, the one he'd been looking forward to for *weeks.* His boyfriend, Leon, had gotten them tickets for tonight's game *months* ago, and Connor would probably lose his shit about having to miss it in a deeply uncool manner.

The Ottawa Centaurs were finally in town to play the Edmonton Machines, which would have been enough for Connor and Leon to get tickets, but it was also the Machines' *Pride Night*. And more than anything, Connor wanted to hold his boyfriend's hand at a Pride Night game and watch the Hollander-Rozanovs play hockey together. It was going to be a good night of gay hockey and Connor would be damned if he missed it.

So. The day was not off to a great start.

He grumbled about it to himself as he wiped down the windows, counted the tills, vacuumed the rug in the children's section, rolled out the cart of books to be shelved, checked the phone messages, pulled out the chalkboard sign for the sidewalk, and flicked on the lights. All the while cursing Darnell's name and sending frantic messages to his coworkers to see if anyone could help cover the store.

He was through a good chunk of the shelving when he heard the bell on the front door jingle. It was a high, tinny thing, and deeply annoying on a good day. And, listen, Connor loved his job, but he was not really in the mood to put on a happy face for a customer right then and there. Still, he was a professional, and it wasn't the customer's fault he was in a bad mood.

So with a sigh, he put down the stack of books he was holding and started making his way to the front of the store. He turned a corner and–

Froze.

He froze.

Jaw hanging open.

Eyes wide.

He was–

There was no way–

6’3”. Honey blonde curls. A crooked nose.

“Hello,” Ilya Rozanov waved his hand.

Ilya fucking Rozanov.

Ilya FUCKING Rozanov was in his bookstore.

Ilya–sure, let’s go with a first name–raised one of his perfect eyebrows. “You work here, yes?”

Connor blinked, and the breath came back into his lungs. “Uh, yes, I do. Mr. Rozanov, sir.”

A slow smile spread across his handsome face. *Fuck.*

“You are a fan?” Ilya grinned. “Even in Edmonton?”

In a split second, Connor made a very specific choice. “You’re my boyfriend’s favorite player.”

It landed the way Connor hoped it would, a specific kind of warmth that came with finding other queer people in public. There was a genuine way that Ilya’s eyes lit up, a soft way that he relaxed his shoulders. It was a sensation that was so intimately familiar to Connor after growing up in the world of hockey, and he’d just shared that moment with *fucking Ilya Rozanov.*

And then Ilya frowned.

“Wait, I am not *your* favorite player?”

Connor flushed. “Hollander was always my favorite.”

Ilya rolled his eyes. “You boring Canadians, I swear to god.” But then he leaned in and winked. *Winked*. “Hollander was always my favorite hockey player, too.”

Connor was gonna pass out.

“I am actually here for him,” Ilya looked around the bookstore, taking in the warm lights and the dark wooden shelves. “I had bought him an anniversary present a few weeks ago and then forgot it at home.” He shrugged. “Forgot we would be on road trip for it.”

“Oh,” Connor said, like an idiot.

“I snuck away from the team so I could grab something for him. My husband loves boring hockey books. I figured you would have some here.”

Connor blinked. “You want me to–”

He swallowed.

“You want me to pick out a hockey book for Shane Hollander?”

Ilya narrowed his eyes. “Are you going to pass out?”

“Maybe.”

“Can you do that after you give me books?” Ilya checked his watch. “I do have a game tonight.”

“Right, yes,” Connor’s bookseller brain kicked into action. “Do you know what he likes to read?”

Ilya nodded, pulling out his phone. “I took pictures of the last few books he read. But they all look very old and boring. Gifts from his dad. I was hoping you would have something new? Maybe more interesting?”

And then Connor was looking at images on Ilya Rozanov’s phone. Photos from his house. Photos of Shane Hollander’s books in their house that they share together. Christ above.

“Oh, I’ve read some of these,” Connor said, coming back to reality. “They *are* boring.”

Ilya lit up. “See! I always say he needs to get interesting hockey books. But no, he wants to read about hockey in the Soviet Union,” he said, making a face.

“I think I’ve got some recommendations. Come on, our sports section is over here.”

Connor knew exactly what books he wanted to pull off the shelf. It was a dream come true to get handsell books to a celebrity, and he wasn’t going to waste a second of it. Ilya listened intently as Connor recommended him a flurry of books—a memoir written by the first Muslim hockey player to lift the Cup, a book written by two players of color about toxic hockey culture and how to fix it, a very niche book about Emergency Back Up Goalies, and an incredibly interesting narrative nonfiction about five Russian players who played in Detroit in the late 90s.

“It’s practically a spy novel,” Connor was saying. “It’s got espionage, secretly escaping the country, and a lot of good hockey. If he’s interested in the Soviet Union, this one is more niche than the generic history of hockey, and it’s got a really strong story in it.”

“That is interesting,” Ilya said, taking the book from him. “I have obviously heard of these players, but hadn’t bothered to learn anything about them.” He looked back up at Connor, wiggling the book. “Shane will like this one a lot.”

Connor nearly swooned.

“I think he would like all of these,” Ilya said, gesturing to the books. “I will get whole stack.”

“The whole–” Connor blinked.

“He will probably read half of them on this road trip. He reads on the plane like a nerd.”

This might be the best day of Connor’s whole life, actually.

“Still, do you have any hockey books that are…” Ilya waved a hand. “Fun?”

Connor surveyed the shelf in front of him. “I mean, not really. Just a lot of memoirs and generic stuff he’s probably already read. Unless–”

And Connor promptly shut his mouth, clacking his teeth.

Ilya caught it immediately, because of course he was a perceptive motherfucker, and he pointed at Connor. “What was that face?”

“Nothing,” Connor flushed.

The Russian’s eyes twinkled. *Twinkled.* “No, you *do* have fun hockey books. Are they the really sexy ones?”

“I mean–”

“They are!” Ilya looked delighted. “Please show me the sexy hockey books. I have heard so much about them and I want to judge them.”

Connor knew he had to be redder than his hair. “Uh– I mean, if you’re sure,” he said, and started walking over to the romance section. It was one thing to hand a hockey superstar a non-fiction book about hockey, and it was another thing to hand over a book with shirtless men embracing on the cover. Once again, Connor felt like he was going to pass out.

“I want something super gay,” Ilya said, following behind. “Or super bisexual. But no straight people bullshit.”

Connor snorted. “Well, there’s a lot of straight people bullshit in hockey romances right now.”

Ilya wrinkled his nose. “That is not as fun.”

Connor knelt down next to the shelves of brightly colored, pastel spines. It was a section he was intimately familiar with, as much as his boyfriend liked to tease him about them, and his hands knew immediately what books to pull from the shelves.

“This one is about a four person polycule on a team,” he said, pulling the 500 page doorstopper off the shelf.

Ilya cackled. “You’re fucking kidding.”

“It’s not ‘good,’” Connor did air quotes with his free hand. “But it is entertaining. A lot of hockey inaccuracies in it though.”

“I don’t care,” Ilya took the book from him, looking fucking delighted. “I have to read it. Four people?” He raised an eyebrow.

Connor nodded.

The other man barked out a laugh. “Maybe not for Shane, but I will read it. What else do you have?”

Most exhilarating and mortifying experience of his whole life would be recommending hockey romances to a real life hockey player. It was harder than he would have liked to recommend queer romances, even as someone who read a *lot* of these books. The genre was so largely overwhelmed by straight romances written by people who, categorically, knew nothing about hockey. And that was fine, that these women had their fantasy of the dashing hockey hero who would sweep them off their feet, but he personally couldn’t get past the hockey inaccuracies. Even though he’d never gone pro, thanks to a broken collarbone as a kid, he’d spent his whole life surrounded by hockey, and he wasn’t really interested in reading books by authors who had never yelled “*shoot the fucking puck!”* at a game before.

There was one novel, though, that he loved more than anything. His hand hovered over the spine on the shelf, and he felt his cheeks flush again. Actually, he really should probably not recommend *this* specific novel. Fourth wall existed for a reason, and that wall felt paper thin next to *Ilya Fucking Rozanov.*

Rozanov, who was apparently the most perceptive motherfucker alive.

“What was that one?” He asked, leaning over the comically tall stack of books Connor had handed him. “The one you do not want me to see?”

“Jesus Christ,” Connor muttered. “It’s, uh, nothing. Anyway–”

“You are a really bad liar,” Ilya snorted. “Hand it over.”

Fuck his life. “Okay, well, you should know that the author like, worked really hard to develop the characters as her own. She’s a big hockey fan, too, so she was like, really respectful.”

Ilya raised an eyebrow. “Okay?”

And Connor handed him a soft paperback that had two hockey players smiling at each other from across the faceoff dot. One of the players was wearing a black and yellow uniform, and the other was wearing a red and blue uniform.

“This looks like…” Ilya blinked.

“The author was originally inspired by the documentary you guys did a few years ago,” Connor confessed. “The one before you came out? But like I said, they’re totally original characters. “This one,” he tapped the player wearing the black and yellow uniform, “Is Canadian and the captain of a fictional team called the Pittsburgh Penguins. And this one,” he tapped the one wearing the red and blue uniform, “is Russian and the captain of the Washington Capitals. They’re rival teams, and well, you can guess the rest…”

Ilya stared at the book. And stared at it. And stared at it.

And then he began laughing so hard he nearly dropped the entire stack of books he was holding.

“You are kidding with me right now,” he said, putting the stack of books down on a nearby display table. “Is it good?”

“It’s the best,” Connor blushed. “My favorite hockey romance of all time.”

“Holy shit,” Ilya began flipped through it. “For the record, Ovechkin is a stupid name.”

“This is so mortifying,” Connor covered his face with his hands. “I should not have handed that to you.”

“Are you kidding?” Ilya was reading the back of the book. “This is fucking fantastic.” He looked up at Connor very seriously. “How many copies do you have? I am going to buy all of them.”

Connor glanced back at the shelves. “Uh, I think we’ve only got three in stock right now…”

“Can you order more? I am going to get one for every person on the team.”

“*What?!”*

“And the training staff and coaches, too,” Ilya tapped the book against his hand. “Can I order in bulk and have it shipped to Ottawa?”

“I’m gonna pass out,” Connor put a hand to his forehead.

Ilya patted his shoulder. *Patted his shoulder.* “Don’t do that, then I could not buy any books.”

“Are you *sure?”* Connor asked.

“Someone wrote a sexy hockey book about me and my husband,” Ilya said. “I might read it out loud on the team plane.”

And so Connor rang Ilya Rozanov out for a stack of hockey nonfiction books and fifty copies of *Heated Rivalry* by Eloise Reed, to be shipped directly to the Cens practice facility in Ottawa. Ilya was very nice and took a selfie with Connor and signed a copy of the book for Connor to keep himself (*he was gonna die)* and promised that he and Shane would score a goal tonight for him and Leon.

“You are going with your boyfriend tonight, yes?” Ilya said, taking the large paper bag of books from across the counter.

“Yeah, Leon,” Connor blushed. “He got the tickets forever ago.”

“Then Shane and I will score a very gay goal tonight on the Pride Night,” Ilya grinned. “Thank you for your help today, I have learned so much.”

“No, thank you,” Connor stammered. “For like,” he waved his hand. He took a deep breath. “Everything. You and all the other out queer players in the league, it means a lot to us, you know? Hockey can suck sometimes, but you guys make it better. Gives us hope.”

Ilya Rozanov’s eyes looked incredibly soft. “I know.”

The second Ilya was out the door and Connor was alone in the shop, he pulled out his phone and called Leon.

“Con?” His boyfriend said, “Everything okay?”

He leaned against the counter. “You are never going to believe who was just in the bookstore.”

End Notes

And yes, Connor did get a coworker to cover his shift and yes Shane and Ilya would have scored a very gay powerplay goal together that night. And they all lived Happily Ever After

The real life hockey nonfiction books mentioned in this fic: Dreamer: My Life on the Edge by Nazem Kadri, Game Misconduct: Hockey's Toxic Culture and How to Fix It by Evan F. Moore and Jashvina Shah, Odd Man In: Hockey's Emergency Goalies and the Wildest One-Day Job in Sports by Stephen Whyno, The Russian Five by Keith Gave, and Pucking Around by Emily Rath. (The Russian Five is honestly one of my favorite books of all time. It's SO good. And the documentary is on Youtube for free.) I highly recommend all these books if you're looking for recs. I have a lot of love for the sport of hockey, books about hockey, books about fictional boy kissers in hockey, and fictionalizing hockey players to be boy kissers. I hope the show brings in a lot of new fans to the sport! And the kissing!

Also I'm sure most of you know this but in case you didn't, Heated Rivalry was very much inspired by the documentary about sid and ovi's rivalry, so the realities of hockey rpf are collapsing in on themselves with this fic

If you're running out of hollanov fics to read, highly recommend playing paper dolls with the rest of us and getting into hockey rpf. Rachel Reid didn't get me into hockey, but she did open my eyes to the possibility of players kissing. Just remember that the fandom rules are different in hrpf. The fourth wall exists and you need to be more careful of what's posted on twitter. And speaking of, you can find me on twitter and tumblr under the same username. Xoxo and Go Caps!

Addition as of 12/21/26: the response to this fic has warmed my heart so much, i love you all!!! thank you for embracing my weird little meta fic. my one request is to please not post this fic on twitter. i love how vibrant and responsive the fandom has been in recommending fics on twitter, but since this one toes just a little too close to the hrpf fourth wall, I just want to be a little bit more careful. I'd prefer to not lock this fic, so just help me not break containment on twitter! thank you!! <3

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!