



**Finalist Speech for *Hold Me Closer, Necromancer*
Lish McBride**

Hi, team. Thanks for sticking around. We all appreciate it. So, we were told to write two speeches—one in case we won, and one in case we lost. I only wrote one—not because I thought I would win, but because I realized I was going to say the same things either way.

First, I'd thank my agent, Jason Anthony, for the support and for being amazing. Second, I'd thank my editor, Reka, and my new editor, Noa, for being so honest and fun and doing some great handholding during the scary publishing process. Then I'd say how lucky I've been to land at Holt. They've made the process so smooth and wonderful.

Mostly, though, I'd thank the librarians. You're the reason I'm here for the book now, and as a writer in general. I started reading at the age of three. We didn't have a bookstore until I was much older, just a small library that spent a great deal of time ordering books for me. It was a military town, so they mostly had romances for the lonely wives and picture books for the bored kids. I spent a lot of time there, and I still spend a lot of time in the library by my house. In fact one of the greatest things about being published was seeing my book in the library inventory and finding out that it hasn't even made it onto the shelf because there's a waiting list. A waiting list!

Lastly, I'd congratulate my fellow nominees because they deserve it. And now, the only difference in my speech—if I had won, I would say thank you and all that good stuff. And maybe I should feel bad about not winning, but I don't.

This is a debut novel award, and I don't know about the other nominees, but I just feel so grateful that I'm here at all. I mean the book has only been out since October. I'm not even used to the idea that people who don't know me or aren't related to me in anyway are going to read it. And on top of all that now I get a shiny silver sticker for the cover? Well, it's pretty hard to feel bad about that.

Congratulations to Blythe Woolston and all the other nominees and thanks to all of you—you're amazing.