



And the winner is...

By Tanya Nellestein, Sapphire winner 2022

Earlier this year, I was on the phone with my editor talking about my next project. My exact words were: "I'm just waiting to hear that I've not made the shortlist for the Sapphire, and then I'll focus on getting *This Side of Fate* out." Barely five minutes later an email pinged in my inbox – I was a finalist in the Sapphire!

Fast forward to July and I began making plans for publishing once I placed third. I mean, *Fate* is a domestic noir with romantic elements, and I figured a book

with romance as the central theme was going to have a better shot at the trophy. So I researched and designed the cover; sent the manuscript to my three best reader/writer/editor mates and started thinking about release dates.

You can imagine my surprise when MY name was announced at the Gala Awards Dinner. I'd had the pleasure of meeting my fellow finalists Wendy Daniels and PL Harris. We were all convinced we were placing third! We also planned a choreographed acceptance dance. Most of all, we were looking forward to getting up on stage together and enjoying our fifteen seconds of fame.

However, the night ran a little differently to how we'd imagined and when my name was called (and I'd double checked I wasn't hearing things) there was no Sapphire dance trio routine. Nor was there a speech. So here's what I would have said if I'd been let near the microphone (FYI not necessarily a bad decision that I wasn't!).

Oh wow, this is pretty amazing! (Much gazing at the trophy in my hands would ensue to convince myself this was all real). Thank you! I just want to acknowledge the fabulous ladies I was shortlisted alongside – Wendy and Peta. I've

loved every minute of the mutual support and laughs over the last couple of days.

Big thank you to Jacinta Peachey for her outstanding coordination skills, and all the judges, especially Cassandra Di Bello from Simon & Schuster. I really appreciate the time you put into reading my work and the feedback you gave.

I've made some wonderful friends over the past five years at RWA and I am incredibly grateful to each and every one of you who has cheered me on, read and reviewed my words, listened to me work through character arcs and plot holes and laughed uproariously/ smiled politely when I've said something outrageous – again.

This really is an amazing community. Thank you for including me in your number.

♥ *Tanya Nellestein* writes gut-wrenching, page-turning books featuring strong women and flawed heroes.

This Side of Fate will be published 25 October 2022. Pre-order [here](#).

