

# Did the math

By Holly Lisle

I'm estimating 120,000 words for the replacement to **Closer to Chaos**. At my new page set-up, I'm averaging 192 words a page (less than previously, but I now have more room to edit on a page, which is important.) I'll have to do 625 pages, and if I divide those into 50 scenes, I'll average out to 12.5 pages per scene. I have about sixty days to complete the whole project, and no room for missteps. So I'll do a scene a day, or the equivalent – 2400 words. I'll probably round up to 2500 words just to work a bit more breathing room into a schedule that is brutally unbreathable right now.

This seems cold and calculating and lacking in poetry, but remember, so is the math behind the writing of a sonnet. Within the framework, however, of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter with a rhyme scheme of ABABCDCDEFEGG, someone who knows the form can manage a great deal.

I have done these calculations for almost every novel I have ever written. When I know the numbers, I can fashion the tale to fit the form. This is, at bare bones, one form of a novel, and if it is unlovely, it is still a skeleton upon which fair flesh can be laid.

So now, my bag of bones in hand, I pray for beauty.

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