

Scale

By Holly Lisle

92,041. That's how many words I have as I sit down to write this morning. It's a lot of words. For most of the 20+ books I've written to this point, I'd right now be doing the last loop of rope around the calf's fetlocks before stepping back and throwing my hand in the air. For each of the four Matrin novels, which ran 125,000 words apiece, I was 33,000 words away from the finish line – roughly 3/4th's of the way done and trying to make sure I had everything I wanted squeezed in for that book.

I'm 1/3rd of the way done. One THIRD. I still have twice as much to write as what I have already written. I've just barely passed the first pinch, I haven't hit the midpoint twist, anything that could remotely be considered downhill still lies far, far away, unseeable and unimaginable even with a good pair of binoculars.

But the things that amaze me are that I am on track pagewise, and I am actually having to condense and compress in order to keep on pace for the story I want to tell. The book, much to my astonishment, wants to be **longer**. It's a big story. I didn't realize how big until that fact sank in – that I could easily write the book at 500,000 words and not pad a single word, and that by doing it at 250,000 words, I'm going to have to keep squeezing it into its too-tight jeans all the way to the very end and praying that the seams don't explode.

I still remember sitting with my manuscript for **Fire in the Mist**, desperately looking for points where I could squeeze in a tiny bit more action or one more a little scenelet to fill the thing out to the 90,000 words required by the contract. I have to laugh.

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