



# Bringing the Moors to Life

**“T**he fog crept down upon the moor like a living thing, a weakened animal skulking in search of food ...” Thus we are introduced to the moors in Kealan Patrick Burke’s e-serial *Master of the Moors*, a tale of “monsters, murder, secrets and lies.”

Moors, which occur mainly in northern and western Britain and Ireland, are a type of heathland, habitats created by thousands of years of human deforestation on mainly infertile acidic soil. Developing in colder, wetter areas, moors often have extensive bogs and are prone to fog. On the one hand they can be a “beautiful, enticing, and peaceful place,” says Burke, but they “can also be quite deadly.” This is true in both fact and fiction.

“Setting is so important,” says Burke. So he spent a great deal of time researching the moors for the novel. Using Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* as a starting

point, and tales of the Dartmoor beast, which still make it into British newspapers, as inspiration, Burke crafted a moody, thrilling tale set in a foggy, stark land riddled with quicksand and bogs.

Burke had lengthy e-mail conversations with Guy Morlock, a hunt master in Devonshire who has traversed the moors countless times. He viewed documentaries about the moorlands. He marked up his copies of Doyle’s and Bronte’s works. In essence, he got as close as he could to the moors without going there himself, he says.

But a vital, life-like locale – practically a character in and of itself – is not all that makes *Master of the Moors* special. This novel, while a fun, thrilling and entertaining read, is also a peek into the writing process. Burke had not even set pen to paper – or started his research – when he announced the e-serial.

“I took the skeleton of an idea,” he wrote, “splashed the news that I would be doing an e-serial from one side of the Net to the other, set the date and then began my research.” More than four hundred subscribers answered the call.

Before starting *Master of the Moors (MOTM)*, the longest work Burke had written was a novella (works of fiction that range from 20,000 to 50,000 words). In fact, his novella “The Turtle Boy” won the 2004 Bram Stoker

Rocky outcroppings, bogs and heather are common features of moorland.



Photo: Dartmoor. © Dartmoor National Park Authority, 2000

## A Bit About Burke

Born in the small coastal town of Dungarvan, Ireland, Kealan Patrick Burke now makes his home in the US. His fiction and poetry has appeared in more than 30 magazines and anthologies (both in print and on the web), including *Cemetery Dance*, *Would That It Were*, and *Shivers II*. He is the author of *The Turtle Boy*, *The Hides*, *Vessels* and *Ravenous Ghosts*, as well as the editor of *Taverns of the Dead*, *Quietly Now*, *Night Visions 12* and the charity anthology *Tales from the Gorezone*. *Publishers Weekly* gave *Taverns of the Dead* a starred review and has described him as “a newcomer worth

watching.” His short story, “The Quiet,” received an Honorable Mention in Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling’s *The Year’s Best Fantasy and Horror* and is being made into a short film directed by Paul Frieling of Artificial Films.

Moving away from Ireland, he says, has made him appreciate why many people think his homeland is so lovely. In addition, “it taught me that everything has history.” Something that he used to give *Master of the Moors* depth and make its characters more three-dimensional.

A veteran of Irish bar jobs, Burke recommends visiting at least one pub when in Ireland. And, although he feels that Dungarvan would be a lovely stop in anyone’s Ireland itinerary, he recommends The Ring of Kerry for “the ultimate Irish experience.”

For more information about:

- **Kealan Patrick Burke** visit [kealanpatrickburke.com](http://kealanpatrickburke.com). Here you will find more information about Burke’s work, a flash trailer for the film based on his short story “The Quiet”, links to his published works and more.
- **Dungarvan, Ireland** go to [www.dungarvantourism.com](http://www.dungarvantourism.com), where you’ll find information for planning your stay in Ireland’s “Sunny South East.”
- **The Ring of Kerry** visit [www.ringofkerrytourism.com](http://www.ringofkerrytourism.com). This site provides information on all that this area of Ireland has to offer, including, says Burke, golf, the sea, old ruins, graves and an amazing panoramic view.

## The first installment of MOTM went out on Sept. 14, 2004 and the final, Dec. 21, 2004.

Award for long fiction. The awards were presented on June 25, 2005. By the time the last installment of MOTM was posted, the work had reached approximately 90,000 words. Burke had written his first novel!

“There are days of doubt,” Burke wrote, “in which I wonder if by showing ... what is essentially a first draft, a work in progress, without the benefit of substantial editing, I am exhibiting the flaws of my work, demonstrating the foolishness of writing without time to correct.” This may be the case, but it didn’t halt the thrill ride of reading MOTM for this writer.

*Master of the Moors* takes place in Brent Prior, a fictional village in northern England. The town has its share of secrets, one of which involves the strange illness incapacitating the main characters’ father. The heroes of the tale include Neil, a blind boy, Jane, his teen-aged sister, and their family’s faithful servants, Grady and Mrs. Fletcher. Their adversary? A man who smells of burnt flesh and knows things he should not. And then, there is always the Beast of Brent Prior, skulking cat-like on the dark and mist-shrouded moors. What is the Beast of Brent Prior? Who is the burned man? Who will make it to the end of the story alive? You’ll have to read MOTM yourself to find out. You can find it at [lists.topica.com/lists/MasteroftheMoors/read](http://lists.topica.com/lists/MasteroftheMoors/read).



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