

Nicholas Boulton

▶ If you have an unusual accent or a quirky turn of phrase, watch out. Actor Nick Boulton is liable to borrow it. “I get caught out all the time,” he laughs. “I’ll look tuned into the conversation, but I’m really just trying to remember how someone said something so that I can go home and practice it. I’m constantly assimilating.”

Boulton has been assimilating since childhood, when he discovered drama at school and decided to be an actor. By age 16, he had charted a course to the Guildhall School of Music And Drama in London. “It’s been a lifelong passion,” he murmurs in his cashmere-warm baritone. As befits a passion, he embraces it all, acting on stage and screen (he was in *Shakespeare in Love*), as well as in audiobooks, BBC Radio dramas, and video games. “It’s a wonderful panoply for me. A feast.”

Boulton started in audiobooks when a producer asked him to have a go at reading *A Battle Won* by Sean Russell Thomas. “It’s a nineteenth-century naval romp on the high seas. Terrific fun. They liked what I did and asked me back to do more.”

Recently he won an Earphones Award for Alexis Hall’s sexy steampunk adventure, *Prosperity*, which features a protagonist with a Geordie accent from northeast England. “It’s beautifully physical and satisfying to deliver,” he enthuses. “Although swapping from Geordie to Yorkshire

to Edinburgh and back for the different characters—whoa!” He exhales in mock relief, adding, “It does leave you a bit scrambled by the end of the day.”

Speaking of scrambled, the actor who has galloped down a steep ravine while facing an artificially manufactured sandstorm and 200 extras dressed as Saracens says, “Narrating is some of the most taxing acting work you can get. It’s the physicality of it. You’re in the studio for maybe six hours a day. When you emerge, your tongue has swollen to twice its normal size, and you feel as if you have”—his voice assumes a booming magisterial tone—“Spoken for England.”

And then there are the steamy scenes found in romances. “More often than not, they appear before me at 10 in the morning. You have to take a deep breath and go at it,” he chuckles. “Seriously, though, you turn off your own sensibilities and honor the words. Let them do what they want to do.”

Whether narrating the romantic *Uncertain Magic* by Laura Kinsale or the classic *Wind, Sand and Stars* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Boulton revels in his role. “It’s a god-like position, although of course you’re a minor deity compared to the author. Mercury to their Zeus. But to be given the opportunity to explore a world and bring it to life for the listener—that’s a rare privilege.”—*Aurelia C. Scott*



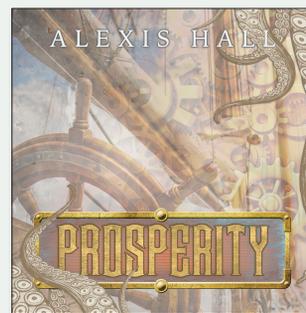
PROSPERITY

Alexis Hall

Read by Nicholas Boulton

Narrator Nicholas Boulton has his work cut out for him with this raucous, ribald Victorian steampunk adventure. Piccadilly, aka Dil, recounts his adventures on the airship *Shadowless*, which glides through the aether without much ado. Dil encounters a host of characters, some charming, some lethal, some sexually addicting, and some not so human. Boulton uses broad British accents bordering on Cockney for most of the characters, including Dil. The fight scenes and the erotic, sometimes explicit, gay sex scenes are fraught with emotion and tension. Boulton’s performance keeps up with the action. He makes this difficult-to-follow story fun to listen to. It’s a convoluted, topsy-turvy steampunk world that Dil embraces. Throughout it all, Boulton ensures that listeners suspend their disbelief while chasing adventures with Dil aboard *Shadowless*. M.B.K.

Hedgehog, Inc. 6 hrs. Unabridged
Trade Ed.:  \$19.95



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