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The Mermaid And Mrs Hancock Book Preview

Shortlisted for the Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction "Wonderful... completely transporting." —Madeline Miller, New York Times bestselling author of *Circe* and *The Song of Achilles* "Historical fiction at its finest, combining myth and legend with the brutal realities of the past. . . .

Comparisons will be drawn to the works of contemporary authors Sarah Waters and Michael Faber . . . but *The Mermaid and Mrs Hancock* has more in common with the novels of Dickens and Austen." —Irish Times In 1780s London, a prosperous merchant finds his quiet life upended when he unexpectedly receives a most unusual creature—and meets a most extraordinary woman—in this much-lauded, atmospheric debut that examines our capacity for wonder, obsession, and desire with all the magnetism, originality, and literary magic of *The Essex Serpent*. One

September evening in 1785, Jonah Hancock hears an urgent knocking on his front door near the docks of London. The captain of one of Jonah's trading vessels is waiting eagerly on the front step, bearing shocking news. On a voyage to the Far East, he sold the Jonah's ship for something rare and far more precious: a mermaid. Jonah is stunned—the object the captain presents him is brown and wizened, as small as an infant, with vicious teeth and claws, and a torso that ends in the tail of a fish. It is also dead. As gossip spreads through the docks, coffee shops, parlors and brothels, all of London is curious to see this marvel in Jonah Hancock's possession. Thrust from his ordinary existence, somber Jonah finds himself moving from the city's seedy underbelly to the finest drawing rooms of high society. At an opulent party, he makes the acquaintance of the coquettish Angelica Neal, the most desirable woman he has ever laid eyes on—and a shrewd courtesan of great accomplishment. This meeting sparks a perilous liaison that steers both their lives onto a dangerous new course as they come to realize that priceless things often come at the greatest cost. Imogen Hermes Gowar, Britain's most-heralded new literary talent, makes her debut with this spellbinding novel of a merchant, a mermaid, and a madam—an unforgettable confection that explores obsession, wonder, and the deepest desires of the heart with bawdy wit, intrigue, and a touch of magic.