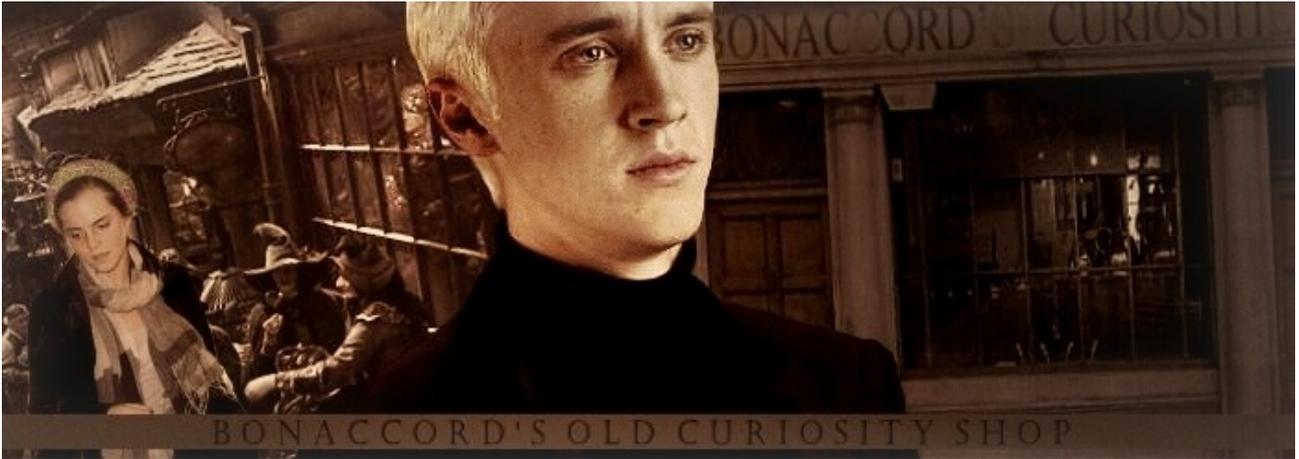


## Bonaccord's Old Curiosity Shop



Author: Ningloreth

Title: **Bonaccord's Old Curiosity Shop**

Story Number: -

Rating: G

Pairing: Draco/Hermione

Summary: In a quiet, forgotten corner of Diagon Alley sits a little shop...

Written for the **dhr\_advent** calendar. The prompt was **bells**.

The main characters in this story were created by JK Rowling. No offence is intended and no profit is being made by borrowing them for use in this story, which is intended as a transformative commentary on the original.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

## Bonaccord's Old Curiosity Shop

**In a quiet, forgotten corner of Diagon Alley sits a little shop. Its paint is flaking, the glass in its curved bay window is grimy, and the battered sign above its door reads**

### **BONAC ORD' CURIOSITI S**

As we approach, the door opens and a young man and woman emerge. Judging by their flaming red hair, the pair are brother and sister, and the brother is looking anxious. "You're sure she'll like crystal goblets?"

"You mean," says his sister, "better than a Chudley Cannons season ticket? What *do* you use for a brain, Ron? No wonder Hermione's dragging her feet!"

"She's not dragging her feet, Gin; she just needs a bit more time to think about it."

"Hermione's been thinking about it since your third year at Hogwarts! *She* was thinking about it when *you* were still thinking that girls had got the dreaded lurgies—if she hasn't made a decision yet, Ron, something's going badly wrong." She sighs, and takes her brother's arm. "Come on, it's freezing out here. Let's go and warm up in the *Leaky*."

Shall we follow them to the hostelry?

No—*wait*—here's another customer.

He's lurking in the shadows, waiting for the red-haired siblings to leave—a tall, lean young man with long, pale hair, impeccably dressed in traditional robes of black moire silk—and, as they walk away, he steps out into the street and, with a furtive little glance over his shoulder, he opens the door, and enters the tiny shop.

*Bonaccord's Curiosities* is overflowing with strange and fascinating objects, all glimmering in the light of everlasting candles. There are enamelled cauldrons from eastern Europe and carved Penseives from the Orient; there are cabinets of cut-glass Remembralls and shelves of milky, stained alembics; there are trays of antique quills, and cases of engraved Probity Probes and piles of old, chipped Gobstones...

But the young man ignores all of these and—as though drawn by an invisible cord—makes, instead, for a pair of silver bells hanging in the window. Each bell is about the size of his palm—though one is slightly smaller than the other—and they are yoked together by a heavy, silver chain. The young man reaches out and, carefully turning their tattered label, he reads aloud, "Weddyng Bells—"

"Can I help you, sir?"

The young man is startled, but he quickly recovers. "How much for these?" he demands.

"Five hundred Galleons, sir."

It's a ridiculous sum, even for something so ancient, but the young man knows that their magic is strong, and—quite frankly—he needs all the help he can get. "I'll take them."

Mr Bonaccord—for it is he—drags a battered ledger across the counter, opens it, and takes up his quill. "Name, sir?"

"I shall pay in cash."

"All sales of curiosities must be properly recorded, sir," replies the old man. "Name?"

The young man swallows his irritation. "Draco Malfoy," he says.

Mr Bonaccord notes it down. "And the lady for whom the gift is intended, sir?"

## **Bonaccord's Old Curiosity Shop**

"Miss Astoria Greengrass."

Mr Bonaccord looks up from his ledger, and smiles. "I'm sure they'll do the trick, sir—you won't be disappointed *this* time."

"*What?* That's—"

"None of my business, sir. Indeed not," says the old man, unperturbed. He closes the ledger. "The items will be boxed, and delivered in the early hours of Christmas Morning, ready for the young lady to open at breakfast, sir."

"Good," says Mr Malfoy, and—his confidence apparently restored—he opens his money pouch and, with the tiniest suggestion of a flourish, counts out the golden coins, stacking them neatly on the counter. "And here's an extra fifty, for your trouble."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr Malfoy gives the old man a nod, and leaves the shop with the air of someone in a great hurry to be somewhere else.

We will follow him in a moment but, for now, let us stay with Mr Bonaccord...

...

The old man shuffles out from behind the counter, crosses to the window and, gingerly, lifts the pair of Weddyng Bells down from their hook. "Time to get to work again," he says, petting them gently.

The bells emit a long, soft, silvery note.

"Ah-aah, not yet! Save that for the young lady!"

Mr Bonaccord takes a plain, white, pasteboard box from under the counter and, holding the bells in his hand to keep them quiet, he lays them inside, and fits the lid. Then he brings out another box, of a similar size and shape and, laying it beside the first, he draws his wand and casts a series of spells.

The first spell seals each box with ribbon; the second, in a shower of golden stars, adds a delivery address; the third transfers them to a sack waiting beside the old man's broom.

...

"Granger!"

When we catch up with Mr Malfoy, he's calling to a young woman who's coming out of Flourish and Blotts—and, although it seems unlikely that he's deliberately engineered the meeting, it's clear that he's no longer in a hurry.

The young woman turns, and smiles. "Draco!"

She's wearing a Muggle coat and a gaily-patterned woollen hat, and the frosty air's put a flush on her cheeks and made her brown eyes sparkle.

"I'm just going into Pucey's for a hot chocolate," says Malfoy. "Can I tempt you?"

The young woman laughs, bringing her hands up to her mouth to blow on her cold fingers. "Sounds wonderful."

"*You* need a pair of gloves." He holds out his arm, and she takes it; they seem comfortable

## Bonaccord's Old Curiosity Shop

together. "Have you finished your Christmas shopping yet, Granger?"

"Almost."

"Let me guess—books for everyone who can read, which means that the Weasel gets nothing?"

"Draco!" She slaps his arm, playfully. "As it happens, I've got Ron something very special this year. What about you?"

"I haven't got him anything." She glares up at him. "Oh, I see! Yes. Well, I've got a case of Ogden's Finest for my father, and an ounce of *Eau de Sorcelle* for my mother, and—um—an antique for Astoria Greengrass."

They've arrived at *Pucey's Tea Shop*, and Malfoy opens the door, and stands aside to allow Miss Granger to enter.

"Why do you always do that, Draco?" she asks, stepping inside.

"Do what?" he responds, following her.

"Call Astoria by her full name."

Malfoy shrugs. "Table for two, please," he says to the waitress.

For the next half hour, the young couple sit at the cosy table, drinking hot chocolate with generous swirls of whipped cream and showers of chocolate sprinkles, talking happily about Malfoy's potions experiments, and Miss Granger's charity work, and anything else the conversation leads them to.

Then Miss Granger glances at the clock above the counter, and says, "Goodness! Look at the time! I must be getting home!" She puts some coins on the table and, as she rises, she leans over and kisses Malfoy on the cheek. "Have a *really* good Christmas, Draco."

Malfoy watches her leave with an expression of—how to describe it?—of fading happiness, regret, and hopeless longing all mingled on his pale, sensitive face.

...

Soon, we'll be seeking out Miss Astoria Greengrass, to make sure that we're watching when she opens Draco Malfoy's gift but, in the meantime, let us follow Hermione Granger, and spend Christmas Eve with *her*.

...

"I'm home, Ron!" Hermione's kneeling before the fireplace, talking across the Floo network.

A face appears—it's the young man we last encountered leaving Bonaccord's curiosity shop. "Why're you so late?" he asks.

"I bumped into Draco Malfoy. Are you coming over?"

"Yes, we're all ready..." Ronald Weasley steps out of the green flames, followed by his sister, Ginny, and her husband, Harry Potter. Hermione's flat is small and cosy, and her friends feel at home there; each makes for a favourite seat, and sits down.

Hermione's decorated the room with swags of evergreens. There's a Christmas tree in the corner, trimmed with Muggle baubles and wizard candles. And the coffee table's groaning beneath a huge spread of festive food—there are tiny tartlets with rich, savoury fillings, and cheeses and pâtés on little slices of toast; there are things on sticks, and colourful dips, bowls

### **Bonaccord's Old Curiosity Shop**

of crisps, plates of mince pies, a jug of mulled wine, and a pyramid of orange clementines.

Hermione's even charmed a Muggle record player to play Christmas carols in the background.

Excitedly, she brings out a pile of brightly-wrapped presents. "This one's for you, Harry, to keep you warm on your broom; and this is yours, Ginny, to help you relax in the evenings; and this,"—she hands a golden envelope to Ron—"is for you!"

"Yours is being delivered," Ron mumbles, uncomfortably. "Tomorrow morning."

"Delivered?"

"It's something posh. Ginny helped me choose it."

Hermione laughs. She's happy and, when she looks at her friends, her eyes are filled with affection.

"You *do* know, don't you," says Ron, through a mouthful of sticky chilli sausages, "that Malfoy never just 'bumps' into you? He's always in the right place at the right time, Hermione; he sees more of you than I do. It's like he's stalking you."

"Oh, Ron!" says Hermione, laughing. "Draco and I both like to browse in *Flourish and Blotts*, that's all. Here, try some of these stuffed cherry tomatoes."

The mood lifts—the food is excellent, and the mulled wine rich and spicy—and the friends settle back, and reminisce, re-telling favourite stories, laughing and joking, and finishing one another's sentences.

But when the Potters leave, Ron lingers behind, and a strange, thick silence fills the room. It's clear that he has something important to say but he's reluctant to say it, and Hermione is almost equally reluctant to hear it...

"Christmas dinner at The Burrow, then," he mutters, at last, and kisses Hermione good night.

...

A few hours later, far from the bustle of wizarding London, in a tall, turreted mansion set in its own little park, we find Miss Astoria Greengrass, lying in her four-poster bed.

Astoria's a light sleeper and, tonight, she's excited, so the soft whisper of a gift passing magically through her window and alighting on the end of her bed awakens her, and she crawls—most gracefully—across the coverlet to see what this Christmas Morning has brought her.

It's a white pasteboard box, long and narrow and quite deep, and it's tied up with a golden ribbon that shimmers orange and copper and red in the firelight. Tucked beneath the bow, an elegant card reads, 'From your soul mate.'

Astoria pulls the tail of the bow, discards the ribbon, and lifts the lid.

"Oh," she cries, clapping her hands together, "they're *lovely!*"

...

Hermione Granger, too, is awoken by Mr Bonaccord's magical delivery.

Hermione normally waits until Christmas dinner's been eaten, and all the dishes have been washed and put away, and everyone has settled down in front of the fire, before she opens her presents but, this morning, she's feeling anxious.

## **Bonaccord's Old Curiosity Shop**

It's not like Ron Weasley to buy her a 'posh' present and have it delivered to her, and when she sees the golden ribbon, and the card that reads, 'From your future husband,' Hermione's heart misses a beat.

She loves Ron Weasley, with all his faults, and foibles, and his big, generous heart.

But she also loves Harry Potter.

And she's very, very fond of Ginny Potter, and George and Charlie Weasley, and Neville Longbottom—she has an especially soft spot for Neville Longbottom—and she's not at all sure that what she feels for Ron is, well, special enough to be the basis for marriage.

And that's why, this Christmas morning, she's decided to break the rules and—slowly untying the ribbon and, half-reluctantly, taking the lid off the box—to open her present early.

It's a pair of silver bells.

Frowning, Hermione grasps the chain that joins them together and lifts them clear of their velvet nest. And the noise they make—the stream of quick-silvered sound—is so melodious, so... *magical*, she shakes them, to hear it again and again.

There's magic in the bells—powerful magic—but Hermione senses nothing Dark or dangerous. The bells are simply reassuring her that everything will soon become clear: that when her future husband asks her to marry him, she will answer with a light and happy heart, and that their love will last a lifetime.

...

Hermione Granger awakes, rested and refreshed, confident that Christmas Day will be a good day.

When she emerges from the bedroom, it's obvious that she's taken extra care in choosing her robes and that, although she's applied more make up than usual, the effect is more sophisticated and yet, at the same time, more natural.

In short, she looks...

Hermione Granger may not be conventionally beautiful, but she's young, and lovely and, today, she's positively glowing.

Let us follow her to The Burrow.

...

A Christmas Day at The Burrow puts all other sorts of Christmas Day to shame.

Mr and Mrs Weasley, their children, their children-by-marriage (like Harry Potter), their children-by-marriage-to-be (like Hermione), and their grandchildren all sit round the table—though some are forced to perch upon stools hastily Transfigured from Muggle artefacts—all wearing party hats and eating turkey and stuffing, with gravy and roast potatoes and carrots and sprouts and bread sauce, followed by Christmas pudding and mince pies, nuts and tangerines, and the excited pulling of Christmas crackers...

And everyone is eating too much, and laughing too much, and too many charms are needed to stop the sprouts sprouting, and the crackers crackling, and the bread sauce getting saucy with the ladies (courtesy of George).

...

## Bonaccord's Old Curiosity Shop

When the meal is finally over, Ron—clearly anxious to get Hermione on her own—volunteers them for washing up duty.

"Hermione," he says, as he dries the last of the plates, "there's something I want to ask—"

"Time to open your present!" she interrupts, brightly.

Hermione is nervous. The bells had made her believe that, today, when she looked Ron, she would see her future husband. But all she's seeing is the friend—the brother—she loves so dearly, but cannot imagine marrying.

"Come on!" She grasps his arm and drags him back into the sitting room, where the rest of the family has already started tearing the paper off a mountain of Christmas gifts. She rummages under the tree, and finds the golden envelope. "Here!"

Ron's obviously disappointed by his failure, but he takes the envelope, and tears it open, and reads the card inside and, "Whoa!" he cries, his proposal completely forgotten, "the Chudley Cannons' Christmas Party!"

"Tonight," says Hermione, smiling. "All the players will be there, and you'll be able—"

Ron sweeps her into his arms, and almost crushes the life from her.

...

But we must leave The Burrow now, and travel to Malfoy Manor, to see a very different sort of Christmas Day.

Here—although the table is long enough to accommodate at least *two* families of Weasleys—there are only six diners: Mr and Mrs Malfoy and their son, Draco, and Mr and Mrs Greengrass and their younger daughter, Astoria. The food is elegant (and impeccably behaved), served in modest portions (because the lady of the house does not want her guests to think her vulgar), and the Dining Room is silent, save for the quiet click of silverware.

When dinner is over, and it is time for the women to withdraw, Draco's father prompts him with a sharp jerk of the head, and Draco invites Astoria Greengrass for a walk in the Rose Garden.

It's cold outside; the sky is already growing dark, and frost is forming on the bushes, but Draco casts a Warming Charm, and he and his companion wander between the rose beds, looking quite comfortable.

When they reach the ornamental pool, Draco clears his throat. This will be his third attempt, but he is sure that, with the bells' help—

"Oh, *no*," says Astoria, "you're not going to be a silly boy and ruin Christmas are you?"

Draco's taken aback. "I... I don't think I understand—"

"Oh, of course you do!" Astoria's peering into the icy water, looking for any signs of the poor, frozen fish. "I may not be a brainbox like you, Draco," she says, "but I do have the sense to see that it could never work. And it isn't me, because—Merlin knows—I don't expect anything from marriage. But you—maybe it's what you went through during the war, I don't know—but *you're* a romantic. You want love, and kisses, and roses round the door. And you wouldn't just stray now and then—you'd want a divorce so that you could marry your floosie. And where would that leave me? Hm?"

She turns to face him, and adds, with a sudden break in her voice that would move even the stoniest of hearts, "Your father would take my *children* from me, Draco."

## Bonaccord's Old Curiosity Shop

She takes a deep breath and draws herself up straight and, when she speaks again, she's her normal, insouciant self once more. "So, no. Not ever. All right?"

Draco bites his lip, and it's clear he's gazing into his future, part relieved to be free of a loveless marriage, part terrified at the prospect of disappointing his father—

"Do you fancy going to a party?" asks Astoria.

"A *party*?" Draco repeats, incredulously.

"The Chudley Cannons' Christmas Party," she says. "I'm the Patron of Cannons for Kids so, of course, I'm invited."

"The Chudley Cannons," says Draco, as though nothing could make this disastrous day more complete. Then he shakes his head at the sheer crassness of life. "Oh, why not?"

...

And that is how we come to be here, at the Chudley Cannons' Christmas Party.

The atmosphere is festive, for the guests have been carefully chosen and the players are secure in the knowledge that, tonight at least, they'll be treated as winners.

Wandering aimlessly through the throng, whilst his ex-girlfriend seems to be bonding with fellow fanatic Ron Weasley (of all people), Draco Malfoy spots a familiar, equally lonely-looking figure, standing by the window. "Granger?"

"*Draco*," she replies, smiling.

And, suddenly, bells are ringing.

...

*...when she looks up at him, he sees a light in her eyes, a joy, that makes his heart lurch, and he knows that he would give everything he owns—empty the Malfoy vaults—to see her, hear her, love her, every day for the rest of his life...*

...

Impetuously, Draco takes Hermione's hand; her wonderful smile dazzles him.

"May I have this dance?" he asks.

"Of course you may," she replies.

... ..

Exactly three hundred and fifty-four days later, we're back at *Bonaccord's Curiosities*, because Draco Malfoy's come to settle a matter of principle.

"I bought these from you last Christmas," he tells Mr Bonaccord, setting the Weddyngge Bells—still in their white, pasteboard box—on the counter.

"I remember it well, sir," says the old man.

"Well, you made a mistake," says Draco, firmly. "I bought these, and you delivered them to my fiancée, Miss Hermione Granger; her friend, Mr Ronald Weasley, bought a pair of *crystal goblets*, and you delivered those to his fiancée, Miss Astoria Greengrass..."

### **Bonaccord's Old Curiosity Shop**

"That sounds correct to me, sir," replies Mr Bonaccord.

"No, no, of course it isn't," says Draco. "You got it the wrong way round!"

The old man frowns. "Well, if you say so, sir," he admits, finally. "In that case, since you're returning the bells in good condition, I'll give you your money back." He presses the *Refund* key on the ancient cash register, and the drawer opens, and the coins rise out and settle in a pile on the counter. "There you are, sir."

Draco picks up the money and counts it. "This is fifty Galleons short," he says.

Mr Bonaccord shakes his head, smiling angelically. "No, sir. If you'll recall, sir," he says, "you gave me the extra fifty for my trouble. And if you reconsider it, sir, I *think* you'll agree that the service I provided was everything you could have wished for."

**THE END**