

The Hopeless Romantic

by Minimadman aka Steven Parrish

It's February 14th and the siren of Ecto-1 blares as the car, in a blur of red and white, spins around a corner. Inside were Ghostbusters Ray Stanz, Egon Spangler, Peter Venkman, and the new recruit.

"Got any reading yet?" Ray asked while gripping the wheel even tighter.

"Nothing" said Egon who was staring at his PKE meter in the backseat with Venkman as the later was tossing popcorn haphazardly into his mouth.

"Ray, do you really think we are going to catch him this time?" Venkman says as he offers Egon the popcorn.

"No one escapes forever Pete" Ray says never taking his eyes off the road. He then looks over at the recruit, reading the puzzled look on his face and says,

"What we are after here kid is what we have come to call The Hopeless Romantic. Egon and I speculate that he was actually a man named John H. Scrimpton. You see Scrimpton was the son of the gardener at the Rockefeller's house back in the glory days with ol John D himself, and John would often accompany his father to work. Well on these trips he struck up a friendship with one of Rockefeller's 4 daughters. No one is really sure which one but it doesn't really matter. What does matter is that when he was 20 Scrimpton, who had taken over for his father as the keeper of the grounds, proclaimed his love for this woman of wealth and status, bad news for him though she told him that she could never be with him because all he'd ever be is a gardener. So here he is pouring his heart out and she could care less. So John takes a pair of shears from his tools and cuts his own heart out and vows that she will never forget him. Now every Valentines Day out comes the Hopeless Romantic to prey the hearts of those in love."

"Touching story ain't it kid." interjects Venkman.

"I got something here Ray. Make the next right and pull over." Egon says in his dry monotone voice.

As the 4 men get out of the car and start to buckle their proton packs there is no mystery as to where they are going mostly due to the hoards of people dressed to the nines running towards them screaming.

"Alright boys," Venkman says as he turns on his pack, "let's give this guy a little TLC."

As the four approach Rockefeller Center people are still running in every direction in different levels of distress.

"Ok Ray, you and Egon take the tower. Me and the rookie will check the ice rink and meet you in the bar for cocktails." Venkman says as they ascend the stairs and as they get closer to the top the scope of the damage becomes more apparent. There are tables in varying stages of disrepair and a few are even on fire, but the most striking change to the art deco icon of Atlas before them is the giant beating heart pulsating in the middle of the globe perched on his shoulders.

"Uh guys, I don't think that they have a permit for this addition" Venkman says as he and the rookie walk over to join Egon and Ray who had already started taking readings and samples.

"It's all ectoplasm," said Ray as he was filling up a second container with what was dripping from the massive heart. "Have you ever seen it take a form like this before?"

"No and to be honest I have no idea on how to get it down." Said Egon never looking away from his PKE meter.

"I kind of like it. I think it add new meaning to all the I heart New York t shirts around here." Venkman says.

A crashing noise disturbs the banter as the windows of Rockefeller Tower burst floor by floor. The four men run for cover as glass rains from above. When the noise stops the four men look up and before them is The Hopeless Romantic. Pale white and the color about is the red from the wound in his chest from the area that used to cover his heart. They waste no time as almost simultaneously they grab the wands from over their right shoulders and begin trying to grab the ghost in the orange and blue streams. "This isn't working," Egon shouts over the noise, "we need to see if we can't distract him and see if that won't make him vulnerable."

"OK. Ray, I'll make faces and you drop your pants" Venkman says while running to avoid a drink machine being thrown at him.

"I was thinking more of insulting him to cause an emotion reaction and in doing so forcing him to relinquish his hold on our world." Egon shouts.

"Well here goes nothing," Ray says squaring himself to the ghost, "Excuse me sir but will you be dining alone tonight or with someone special?"

At the sound of this The Hopeless Romantic spins to face Ray and is seconds from him when Egon says, "Come on he didn't mean that, have a heart huh, it's Valentine's Day"

Egon's plan is seemingly working as the ghost comes to a screeching halt and produces a shrill noise that causes Venkman to flinch before he says,

"Come on Johnny boy all this for a girl? How ugly did you have to be in life that you couldn't close a girl at the turn of the century? She was already rich so it's not really about money. I bet she just said that to set you down easy. You know what I think it was? I think that you spent all those years fertilizing the gardens that you had a permanent smell of..." but the last word never escaped his mouth. The ghost looked as if he were going to explode and then waves of light began emitting from him first knocking down Ray then Egon followed swiftly by Venkman who seemed to have gotten the worst of. He then rounded on the rookie who was standing in disbelief of what was going on around him and at that moment he placed the wand back on his pack raised his palms out toward the approaching ghost and said in a soft caring voice,

"I've been there. I know what you're going through, it sucks. I'm sorry"

John Scrimpton stopped and met the rookie's eyes. The newest Ghostbuster then took the trap off of his belt and slowly slid it towards Scrimpton and stepped on the pedal opening the trap. Without another sound Scrimpton walked over and into the opened trap which snapped closed immediately. The rookie picked up the smoking trap and walked over to the other three who were now covered in the ectoplasm that had made up the giant heart.

"It's over," the rookie said helping them to their feet with the trap still in his hand.

"What happened?" Ray said putting his customary post capture cigarette in his mouth.

"Isn't it obvious?," Egon said, "the plan worked, while the focus of the being was divided on the three of us it allowed for him," gesturing over to the rookie, "to ensnare and subsequently trap him."

"Nice job junior." Venkman said taking off his proton pack.

When they pulled back into the old firehouse Egon looked over at the recruit and said,

"Just take that down to the containment unit in the basement and put him into holding."

The rookie nodded and headed downstairs but he did not put Scrimpton's ghost into the unit with the

rest of the ghosts. He was not like them, Scrimpton's ghost was now at rest and no longer presented any threat to anyone. The next day the rookie took the trap and drove upstate upon reaching his destination he dug a hole and buried the trap hoping that the ghost of John H Scrimpton could now truly rest.