

# STAVE FOUR.

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## THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS.

...“Spectre,” said Scrooge, “Tell me what company that was whom we saw, that sowed so much death and devastation, such degradation of the human spirit?”

Still silent, the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him away, as before—There seemed no order in these visions so far, save that they were in the Future—into the resorts of business men, and those for whose profit suffered and died, but far too many years ahead to possibly concern Scrooge himself. Indeed, the Spirit did not stay for anything, but went straight on through this alien version of London, until arriving at last back where they had begun, though changed now by the passing of decades.

“This plaza,” said Scrooge, “through which we hurry now, is where my place of business once stood, before this great city of steel and glass and electricity consumed it. Let me behold what will one day stand here, in days to come!”

The Spirit stopped; its hand pointed onward already.

Scrooge hastened to the glass wall of a great tower, higher than imagining, and looked in. It was an office still, but not his. The furniture was not the same, and the vast entryway was like a coliseum unto itself. The Phantom pointed as before, now through the great glass wall.

His hand once again upon the Spectre’s dark robe, the two stepped through the glass as if through air. He paused to look round before venturing further.

It was a worthy place. Walled in by cold stone and machinery; overrun by glass and pale unburning lights; the growth of labor's death, not life; choked up with too much opulence, yet devoid of comfort. A worthy place, yet a fearful one!

The Spirit stood among the silent halls and strange mechanical contraptions of this future, and pointed upward to a great stone placard upon the largest wall. Scrooge advanced towards it trembling. The Phantom was exactly as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw new meaning in its solemn shape.

“Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point,” said Scrooge, “answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?”

Still the Ghost pointed upward to the great engraving by which it stood.

“Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead,” said Scrooge. “But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!”

The Spirit was immovable as ever.

Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the oppressive tower's wall two names: Scrooge & Marley...

