The Ghost Flower

I watch helplessly as the golden memory fades into oblivion. In a past life it was beautiful, eagerly unfurling bright yellow petals marked like liquid sun. Small beads of water lay dormant on their surfaces, disrupted for the briefest of moments in their journey towards the ground. Each of its petals attached themselves to a lush and brown center reminiscent of a pine cone, with miniscule layers of pointed protrusions stacked on top of each other. A radiant, green stem rushed up from the ground to meet it, completing a near perfect picture of brilliance.

But before me now stands a husk, nothing but a monochrome reflection of the past. Each petal, a dull gray in their slow deaths, appears coated with a thin film of frost (a quick run over with my finger proves this observation false). Dark blight now spots the once vibrant center, draining its color down to the last drop. Its stem, feebly supporting the weight of the deceased flower, seems hardened into a brittle death, and gray leaves drape at its side in a manner reminiscent of an old wedding gown, the wearer long since widowed.

The early winter season had pulled no punches. Each blow left the flower desperately grasping for the warmth of months long since passed, battering it with wind and cold until it stood hueless in embarrassment and defeat.

Why and to what do you cling? I can’t help but ask the question to this pointless non-survivor. It lost its battle with the cold some time ago, but here it stands, stubbornly
managing to remain upright, continuing some kind of struggle clearly beyond the one for life. Indeed, it looks almost as if the flower fights for its prior image, the natural work of art I remember so well. That radiant flower can never again show its bright face in this dead figure. Nonetheless, it continues its feeble grip on the ground, never once thinking of relinquishing the struggle. I pity it.

But hindsight, I must admit, offers me a distinct advantage over this trembling flower. I see what it cannot. I witness the days turn, the weeks pass, and the seasons change. I know the cycle. Where this dead figure sees only its present and the wonder of its past, I am privileged to its future: for after the wind, after the cold, after the snow, after the winter, comes rebirth. Thus that poor little plant, once believing itself dead eternally, will sprout fresh from the ground once more.

Yet what I see the flower can never know. Desperately it continues to cling, gently swaying along with the breeze yet torturing itself in attempting to prolong a perfect memory. But as I begin to retreat, the pale figure’s bleak opacity turns reflective, posing the question back to its sender:

*Why and to what do you cling?*