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Summit High School, Junior
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Dear Carnton,

If love letters had envelopes, yours would be addressed to 1345 Eastern Flank Circle, Franklin, Tennessee. Though I suspect you've been waiting right here all along. You stand with a quiet confidence, red brick cheeks warmed by the sun, as if you know you are impossible to pass without noticing. I didn't mean to fall for you so quickly, but then again you've had nearly two centuries to perfect your first impression.

You greet the world with symmetry and grace, your Federal Style bones standing tall and steady, and your later Greek revival column lift your chin just a little higher. Those iconic curls at the top of your portico feel like carefully styled hair, elegant but never showy. You are not flashy but composed, the kind of house that doesn't ask for attention, but earns it anyways.

Your windows watch more than they reveal. I imagine them blinking awake with the morning light, stretching across the fields as they have done since 1826. They have seen carriages turn to cars, lanterns turn to lightbulbs, and silence turn to crowds who come just to witness your beauty and hear you breathe. Your doors sigh when they open, as if remembering every hand that has pushed against them, every welcome and every farewell.

Your porch, unusual for the time. Large for a colonial style house but gorgeous, stained from the blood of soldiers. Color fading over time, yet in all of that your beauty still shines. Two stories of porches, with seven columns holding you up, supporting you as you age.

But you are so much more than your beauty. You have a memory, long and heavy, however you carry it with remarkable grace. On a cold November day in 1864, with the battle of Franklin roaring around you, you didn't flinch or fall. On that day you became more than a home, you became a healer. Your floors absorbed pain and courage alike, and they will never forget nor will you. The stains you bear are not marks of weakness but proof of compassion. Scars that tell the world you held on when it mattered most.

I imagine you listening that night, the sound of hurried footsteps and faint prayers. The groans of pain that echoed through your walls. I imagine you wishing your walls were wider, your arms longer, that you could shelter all who needed help. And maybe you did, in the only way a house knows how, by standing firm, by refusing to fall, and welcoming all who needed it.

Outside your garden breathes for you, the cedar stands like old friends that know when to be quiet. They've watched seasons pile up like letters, but never thrown away. They've seen grief transform into remembrance as history turns pain into gratitude. Together you and the land seem to hum, with an understanding that life changes but memory always stays.

Yet I like to think you remember joy just as clearly. Laughter drifting from your porches. Conversations carried by warm summer air, or cold winter nights. The steady rhythm of ordinary

days that mattered just as much as the extraordinary ones. You were once simply a house full of life, full of noise, and now you are a house that is standing holding all of it at once. Embarrassing the past and pain and radiating it through your presence.

That's what I love most about you, Carnton. You never pretend to only be one thing. You are elegance and endurance, beauty and bravery, a home that grew older without growing quiet. You stand as proof that even houses have hearts, and that some hearts are strong enough to hold centuries.

So this is my letter to you, not to preserve you as you've already done that yourself, but to thank you for staying. To thank you for remembering. For teaching anyone who walks your halls that history is not just something we learn, it is something we feel, and love.

With admiration and great affection,

A great admirer