A scream pierced the air—

but not from Emma.

Emma froze in the doorway, staring at Gracie, whose wide eyes made her look like she’d just been caught with her hand in the cookie jar.

The computer lab was pitch black, the iron shutters warding off every bit of light—except for the soft blue glow of the monitor in front of Gracie and the projector screen it was paired with.

*I guess that explains the glow,* Emma thought.

She noticed her fists were still clenched and realized she probably looked like the Kool-Aid Man breaking through the wall.

*And that might explain why Gracie still looks so startled.*

Forcing herself to relax, Emma raised a hand in greeting.

“Hey, Gracie.”

“Hey...”

“What—what are you doing in here?” The words slipped out before Emma could think better of them. Not knowing what to do with her hands, she shoved them into her jean pockets and glanced around the room like she hadn’t just burst in here.

Gracie dragged a hand over her face, then looked around too—as if only now realizing how dark it was in there. There was still a trace of concern in her eyes.

*Did I really startle her that much?*

Gracie’s blue eyes met Emma’s brown, and after a hesitant pause, she offered, “Just doing a bit of research.”

Emma nodded, mostly to fill the silence, and turned toward the projector screen to avoid Gracie’s gaze scraping over her. “Right, sorry,” she muttered, already half-turned to leave. “I’ll leave you to it—”

The words caught in her throat.

Her eyes locked on one of the women projected on the screen.

If it hadn’t been so dark, Gracie might have noticed the color drain from Emma’s face. Still, she could tell something had changed.

“What… what is it?” Gracie asked softly.

Emma heard the words, but they sounded far away—muffled and distant, like she was underwater.

It was the woman.

The ghost-librarian.

Emma was sure of it.

She looked younger—her face thinner, cheekbones more defined—but it was her alright. The same face. The same nose. The same lips. Her hair was pinned back just as Emma remembered it that night in the library.

The photo was grainy, decades old, but unmistakable. The woman stood beside Mrs. Willoughby in the image, both posed stiffly, the kind of formal portrait meant to outlast time itself.

Emma’s heart hammered. She *knew* what she’d seen that night was real—or at least, she’d believed it. But as the days passed, doubt had crept in, whispering maybe it was all in her head.

But now...

Now the woman was right in front of her.

“Who is that?” Emma asked, not daring to take her eyes off the picture.

Gracie looked between Emma and the image projected on the screen.  
“Mrs. Willoughby? She’s—”

“No, not her,” Emma said—more sharply than she meant to. “The other woman. Beside her.”

“Oh—her?” Gracie tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and squinted at the photo. “I’m not sure. I think she used to work for Mrs. Willoughby, though. You can tell she’s standing a little behind her—not beside. Like staff or something.”

Gracie turned to Emma then, brow furrowing. “Why? Do you… recognize her or something?”

*Or something*… “She looks… familiar.” Emma cleared her throat.“Why are you looking into the Wiloughby’s?”