*She’s real. She’s really real.*

Emma knew her mind hadn’t been playing tricks on her. Knew, deep down, that it hadn’t been some psychotic lapse or stress-induced dream.

But seeing her again—the woman from the picture, the *ghost*—standing in the doorway in that same outdated dress, with the same stiff hairstyle and that hazy blue glow bleeding softly around her edges…

That was another matter entirely.

It confirmed everything—everything Emma had researched, doubted, and secretly hoped was both true and impossible.

That maybe there really *was* more to this library than met the eye.

It took every ounce of willpower to tear her gaze away, but when she did, she found Gracie beside her—jaw nearly scraping the ground, eyes wide enough to swallow the moon.

“Who—what—is…” Gracie stammered.

“Yes. That’s her.” Emma’s voice came out steadier than she felt.

Gracie turned toward her, shivering—whether from the sudden chill or from fear, Emma couldn’t tell. “What—what do we do?” she whispered, her knuckles white where she gripped the iron gate.

As if in answer, the ghost-librarian raised one translucent hand, waving them forward.

Gracie went utterly still. The shivering stopped—along with, it seemed, her breath.

Every logical thought in Emma’s head screamed *run*, run for home and don’t turn back—but something else rooted her in place. An unexpected calm rising from her stomach.

“We do what we came here to do,” Emma said, willing Gracie’s wide eyes to meet hers until they did. “We go talk to her.”