Mirror of identity
Semi-finalist

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Image location: The photograph, featuring my grandmother's friend's hands, was taken at a special moment when she unveiled her true story at her private garden. Until that revelation, her hands seemed to speak only of her wealth and attention to style. However, learning about her forced marriage and the pain concealed beneath her fashionable exterior, her hands took on new meaning—they were a map of her life's journey and her silent compliance with societal expectations.

Image Description

"Mirror of Identity" is a heartfelt portrayal of an elderly woman's life told through her hands. These hands, with their deep wrinkles and fine jewelry, belong to my grandmother's dearest friend. She was forced into marriage for the sake of wealth, not love. The creases in her skin narrate her enduring journey, while the jewels reflect a marriage based on her husband's riches, not affection. This image invites a reflection on how social expectations often shape and sometimes overshadow personal identity. It asks us to look deeper, beyond the sparkle of wealth, to understand the real person and her story of resilience.
This image is a cornerstone of my research, which delves into the complex layers of human identity in a societal context. It interrogates how societal norms and expectations often delineate and dictate personal stories, compelling individuals to live within the confines of roles that may not resonate with their true selves. The contrast between the wrinkled skin and the ornate jewelry starkly illustrates the dichotomy between lived experiences and the facades we present to the world.

Image Creation

To capture this narrative visually, I chose photography, a medium that can simultaneously document reality and convey profound emotion. In editing the photograph with Photoshop, I employed techniques such as adjusting shadows, contrast, and lighting to highlight the hands' textures and the jewelry's glint, reinforcing their symbolic representation. A dark background was deliberately selected to bring the viewer's focus immediately to the hands, making them the sole storytellers in the image.

These choices in the photo's editing process align with my research into how society shapes our identity. By emphasizing the hands and their details, I wanted to create a powerful image that reflects the complex layers of an individual's life and the societal expectations they may carry. The edited photo not only captures a moment but also represents the deeper themes of my study: how our identities are often hidden behind what society expects to see.