



Arts Engagement
and Education

BENEATHA YOUNGER

"Me?...Me?...Me, I'm nothing"

From *A Raisin in the Sun*

By Lorraine Hansberry https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorraine_Hansberry

Gender: Female/Feminine Presenting

Style: Contemporary Dramatic

Age Range: 20 years old

Link to Buy Script: www.amazon.com

Play Synopsis:

A Raisin in the Sun portrays a few weeks in the life of the Youngers, an African-American family living on the South Side of Chicago in the 1950s. When the play opens, the Youngers are about to receive an insurance check for \$10,000. This money comes from the deceased Mr. Younger's life insurance policy. Each of the adult members of the family has an idea as to what he or she would like to do with this money.

The Matriarch of the family, Mama, wants to buy a house to fulfill a dream she shared with her husband. Mama's son, Walter Lee, would rather use the money to invest in a liquor store with his friends. He believes that the investment will solve the family's financial problems forever. Walter's wife, Ruth, agrees with Mama, however, and hopes that she and Walter can provide more space and opportunity for their son, Travis.

Finally, Beneatha, Walter's sister and Mama's daughter, wants to use the money for her medical school tuition. She also wishes that her family members were not so interested in joining the white world. Beneatha instead tries to find her identity by looking back to the past and to Africa.

Before this moment:

A white man comes to the door and introduces himself as Karl Lindner, a representative of the Clybourne Park Improvement Association. He appears awkward and uncomfortable. The Youngers listen with interest as he explains that he wants to welcome new neighbors to Clybourne Park and encourage dialogue. Lindner claims to "deplore" the violence black residents face in white neighborhoods and wants to do something about it. Beneatha is suspicious, but Ruth and Walter are listening openly. Slowly Lindner reveals his belief that communities should "share a common background" and black families should live in their own communities. As the Youngers become openly disdainful, Lindner says the association wants to buy back the house at a financial gain to the family. Beneatha sarcastically refers to the offer as "thirty pieces and not a coin less."

Walter refuses to hear the offer and asks Lindner to leave. Lindner asserts that the Youngers will not be welcome in their new neighborhood and leaves his card. Walter, Ruth, and Beneatha, after being momentarily stunned into silence, explain the visit with sarcasm and dark humor to Mama and Travis when they return. Mama asks with fear if Lindner threatened them. "They don't do it like that any more," says Beneatha, explaining that Lindner disguised his true intentions with "good Christian fellowship."

Shaken but still excited for the move the Youngers switch their attention back to the packing. Mama declares her intention to take her plant with her to the new house, even though Beneatha calls it "raggedy-looking." Mama retorts that the plant is her form of self-expression. Then the members of the family present gifts to her. Walter, Ruth, and Beneatha give Mama new gardening tools. Travis gives her a large gardening hat. The adult Youngers laugh at the hat's resemblance to "Scarlett O'Hara," except Mama, who's genuinely touched.

The bell rings. The Youngers, who didn't expect the movers this early, are surprised. But Walter seems to know who's at the door. He greets Bobo, a small, frightened-looking man and a fellow investor in the liquor store. Bobo's nervous demeanor makes Walter's good mood fade, as Walter suspects there's bad news. Walter and an increasingly concerned Ruth ask a reluctant Bobo to tell them what happened. Bobo reveals slowly that investor Willy Harris took his and Walter's money, which they gave him for the liquor license, and disappeared.

Walter, shocked and dismayed, at first believes they'll be able to find Willy. As Walter realizes the truth—he's been swindled—he screams at Bobo and crumples to the floor, weeping. He reveals to Mama, when she asks, that all the money she gave him, including the portion to be set aside for Beneatha, is gone.

An hour has passed since the events of the last act. The family's sitting silently when Asagai comes to the door, cheerful and ready to help with packing. Beneatha tells him Walter gave away the money, jeopardizing the financial security the family needs to move. She talks about the accident she witnessed as a child that made her want to become a doctor. Asagai asks if she's stopped caring, and Beneatha admits she has.

Monologue (Act III)

Me? . . . Me? . . . Me, I'm nothing . . . Me. When I was very small. . . we used to take our sleds out in the wintertime and the only hills we had were the ice-covered stone steps of some houses down the street. And we used to fill them in with snow and make them smooth and slide down them all day. . . and it was very dangerous, you know. . . far too steep. . . and sure enough one day a kid named Rufus came down too fast and hit the sidewalk and we saw his face just split open right there in front of us. . . And I remember standing there looking at his bloody open face thinking that was the end of Rufus. But the ambulance came and they took him to the hospital and they fixed the broken bones and they sewed it all up . . . and the next time I saw Rufus he just had a little line down the middle of his face. . . I never got over that. . . That that was what one person could do for another, fix him up sew up the problem, make him all right again. That was the most marvelous thing in the world. . . I wanted to do that. I always thought it was the one concrete thing in the world that a human being could do. Fix up the sick, you know and make them whole again. This was truly being God. . .

Helpful Links: <https://youtu.be/HFMIVTIIHsQ>

<https://youtu.be/HFMIVTIIHsQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qd0mUcOp0Kc>