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Read this passage carefully, and then answer the question that follows it:

[RUTH comes in forlornly and pulls off her coat with dejection. They both look at her.]

Ruth [dispiritedly]: Well, I guess from all the happy faces – everybody knows.

Beneatha: You pregnant?

Mama: Lord have mercy, I sure hope it's a little old girl. Travis ought to have a sister.

[BENEATHA and RUTH give her a hopeless look for this grandmotherly enthusiasm.]

Beneatha: How far along are you?

Ruth: Two months.

Beneatha: Did you mean to? I mean did you plan it or was it an accident?

Mama: What do you know about planning or not planning?

Beneatha: Oh, Mama.

Ruth [wearily]: She's twenty years old, Lena.

Beneatha: Did you plan it, Ruth?

Ruth: Mind your own business.

Beneatha: It is my business – where is he going to live, on the roof?

[There is silence following the remark as the three women react to the sense of it.]

Gee – I didn't mean that, Ruth, honest. Gee, I don't feel like that at all. I – I think it is wonderful.

Ruth [dully]: Wonderful.

Beneatha: Yes – really.

Mama [looking at RUTH, worried]: Doctor say everything going to be all right?

Ruth [far away]: Yes – she says everything is going to be fine ...

Mama [immediately suspicious]: 'She' – What doctor you went to?

[RUTH folds over, near hysteria.]

Mama [worriedly hovering over RUTH]: Ruth honey – what's the matter with you – you sick?

[RUTH has her fists clenched on her thighs and is fighting hard to suppress a scream that seems to be rising in her.]

Beneatha: What's the matter with her, Mama?

Mama [working her fingers in RUTH's shoulder to relax her]: She be all right.

Women gets right depressed sometimes when they get her way. [Speaking softly, expertly, rapidly.] Now you just relax. That's right ... just lean back, don't think 'bout nothing at all ... nothing at all –

Ruth: I'm all right ...

[The glassy-eyed look melts and then she collapses into a fit of heavy sobbing. The bell rings.]

Beneatha: Oh, my God – that must be Asagai.

Mama [to RUTH]: Come on now, honey. You need to lie down and rest awhile ... then have some nice hot food.

[They go out, RUTH's weight on her mother-in-law. BENEATHA, herself profoundly disturbed, opens the door to admit a rather dramatic-looking young man with a large parcel.]

Asagai: Hello, Alaiyo –

Beneatha [holding the door open and regarding him with pleasure]: Hello ...

[Long pause.] Well – come in. And please excuse everything. My mother was very upset about my letting anyone come here with the place like this.

Asagai [coming into the room]: You look disturbed too ... Is something wrong?

Beneatha [still at the door, absently]: Yes ... we've all got acute ghettoitis. [She smiles and comes towards him, finding a cigarette and sitting.] So – sit down! How was Canada?

[from Act 1, Scene 2]

In what ways does Hansberry make this such an upsetting moment in the play?

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Hansberry makes this moment in the play quite upsetting in a number of ways. An arrival of a newborn brings happiness and life yet this moment portrays it as death and sadness because it will bring the house nothing but financial pain and more struggle than they already face. This paragraph also discusses abortion, abortion is termination of a foetus before birth generally in the first trimester. Abortion is a happy process for some but it is known to cause depression in women. An implied abortion procedure is discussed causing Mama some distress. In this excerpt, a baby, bringer of joy to many, is overshadowed by sadness, financial distress and anger.

Ruth enters the scene 'forlornly', and her "dull" reaction to the baby sets up a mood of sadness. Ruth is usually a lively happy character but in this scene, she is shown as sad. This raises some concern by the audience, what could have possibly gotten her mood down. She is 'pregnant'. Mama portrays a happy look full of 'enthusiasm' showing that she does not understand the concerns and burden of having yet another person live in their cramped apartment with a small source of income. Mama symbolizes a carefree person who tries to live her life without worry. It also shows the thinking of her generation, who were always happy to have many children and many people of then thought abortion was a crime. Mama's "enthusiasm" is crushed when an abortion is implied, this causes the scene to be emotional and sad for mama and some of the audience. Ruth visits a "she" doctor for her check-up. This implies that Ruth wants to do something a traditional, male doctor would not do, an abortion. The stark contrast between Mama's "enthusiasm" at the beginning and "suspicion" and "concern" towards the end causing this moment to be emotional and sad.

"Hysteria" is something women going through abortion often suffer, and it is clearly shown in this scene. Ruth is overcome with anxiety and fear when she decides to abort, this is because during Hansberry's time, women were often trained to think about other before themselves. So, no matter what Ruth wants, she will have to abort the baby because she trained to think about the family's needs. This is emphasized when Beneatha shouts out, "where is he going to live, on the roof?".

This lines pressures Ruth and puts abortion as a greater priority than it would be before. Beneatha's line puts perspective to the size of their apartment. It is true that their apartment is small, having a new baby live with them would take up a lot of space and it could tip off the delicate balance holding the family together. This "hysteria" and "suppress[ed] screams" shows the immense pressure Ruth feels. The audience pities Ruth as she is in this situation of heartbreaking melancholy.

Having the baby would mean that Ruth will not be able to go to work. She is one of the only two people in the family with a stable source of income. Having a baby means more costs, along with Beneatha's schooling and Travis's needs, they wouldn't be able to muster up enough money for the baby. The financial costs may be one of the most concerning things to consider before abortion. Ruth is pressured as she is the one carrying the baby, getting an income and carrying the family's burden and needs. The financial burden and that Ruth carries and the compassion that she provides for all her family members keeps them close, without which the family could potentially fall apart due to stress.

Having her indisposed could cause havoc. With her pregnant, working would be harder, she would have to stop working and devote all her time towards the baby. Costs would increase as they would need baby supplies and this would take a toll on the family's collective well-being. Having to think of so much, it is no wonder that Ruth bursts into a "fit of heavy sobbing". This scene is particularly upsetting since a baby is supposed to bring happiness, but all Ruth can think about is her family and the consequences of having the baby versus aborting it. Having the baby could cause financial damage while not having it could sour her relationship with Mama.

In conclusion, Hansberry makes this moment in the play particularly distressing as the Ruth has to decide something that could potentially change her family forever. The baby could tear them apart due to the economic burden, while getting an abortion would sour her relationship with Mama. It is particularly saddening as Ruth is the one making this decision and she has a lot to think about causing all the "suppress[ed] screams" and "hysteria" to turn into "a fit of heavy sobbing" stimulating the reader to pity Ruth.