

The Haves and the Have Nots

“Beulah Stevens, you are the biggest liar I’ve ever met. Don’t just stand there gawking at me, with your mouth wide open. You know I’m telling the truth.

“You have been telling lies about me since we were in grade school and I’ve waited forty long years to make you face me. Remember when we were in first grade and you told Mary Clinton that I was adopted? I don’t guess that was the first lie, but it’s the first one I remember because it hurt so much. I wondered for weeks why all the kids were suddenly being so nice to me. You were certainly convincing, and you would never have been found out if Mary’s mother hadn’t mentioned it to my mom.

“Oh no, you’re not. Beulah, you’re not leaving here just when I’ve finally found the nerve to call your hand. Don’t give me that angry look either. In case you haven’t noticed, I’m twice your size and a whole lot stronger, so don’t you dare turn your back on me.

“Well, I’m sorry your mother nearly beat you to death over that lie, but it didn’t help any did it? You still didn’t stop lying.

“They seem real to you! Beulah, how in the world could a ten-year old girl being pregnant seem real? Woman, you need help. I guess you’ve lied so much that they seem real to you, but the effects of that lie caused me more embarrassment than I’ve ever had in my life. All the boys in that school kept trying to pull up my dress until I had to tell the teacher. I guess you got thrashed for that one too, didn’t you?

“Oh yeah, I forgot. That was the year your mother died wasn’t it? I’m sorry, Beulah, but why did you take it out on me?

“No, Beulah, I don’t hate you, but you don’t know the times I’ve wanted to pull every hair in your head out. I never could stay mad at you for some reason, but I’m mad now. I’m so mad that I don’t feel sorrow for you anymore. Why would you even want to tell that I’m sleeping with two men. Don’t you know that can ruin my name around here? What do you think they’re going to say at church when that lie gets out?

“Where did that lie come from anyway? I’m sleeping by myself and have for the last fifteen years and you know it. My Ronnie was the only man I ever loved, and I married him.

“You’re what! You’re jealous of me! Why on God’s green earth would you be jealous of me? You’re the one with that big old house, with servants to run it, and driving around in a Cadillac. Beulah, you’re just making up another lie to get me sorry for you, so stop it.

“Well I guess you are lonely, but I didn’t cause that. It’s just because people think you are a cut above them. You know how people think. If you have a better house and drive a better car, you’re thought to be stuck on yourself.

“Well, I don’t know how to change that. I’ve never had more than anyone else. Fact is, I’ve never had as much as most people, so I don’t have a clue as to how to help you.

“Beulah, you’re doing it again. That’s just another one of your big acts, thinking I’ll feel sorry for you, aren’t you? Here now! Why are you crying? Stop that sniveling and come on with me. I’m going to the drug store and I don’t want people to think I’ve whipped the socks off you for lying on me again.

“Yeah, I did say again, Beulah. Don’t think the people around here are stupid. Surely you didn’t think you could tell lies all this time and never get caught up in them. People around here know me pretty good and they’ll probably laugh when they hear this lie, but how do you think I’ll feel when it gets to Bill Martin and Jerry Lester. I’ll be ashamed to look them in the face.

“Men like me! What is wrong with you woman? I hope everybody likes me. Yes, they do stop and talk to me and Bill Martin did bring me out a load of wood. He tore an old building down and needed to get rid of the wood. He’d have done the same for you, but he’d know you wouldn’t need it.

“No, you don’t, Beulah. What would you do with a load of wood? You don’t even have a cook stove, well not one that needs wood to work.

“You have a what? A heart. Oh Beulah , you really are lonely aren’t you? Well, stop crying and I’ll try to get Jerry Lester to come up there and trim up some of your trees, but for goodness sakes, don’t wear that fancy fur coat when you go out to talk to him.”