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STRANGE NEW WORLD

by *Orv Owens*

Down, down a long tunnel, I was resisting every attempt to eject me into that other world—the one where I thought I could never be warm, fed, and secure again.

It was the biggest battle of my life, and whether I would win or lose remained for the sages to say—for the prophets of that other world to accept or reject whatever it was I was to become.

Why should I give up the known for the harsh, cruel, uncaring world on the other side of tonight? Why shouldn't I fight the good fight? Why shouldn't I demand to remain in a world I understood?

In that other world I would be ignored after the newness wore off and after I had cooed and wooed those foreign beings I so resembled.

In that world I might as well be an insignificant number written upon a suspecting heart. There I would soon be forgotten, as common souls often are.

Seasons would come...seasons would go. How could I ever hope to achieve what was not meant for me to achieve? How could I become what I was destined to become? Where was the wisdom to guide me over the years when I couldn't avoid my dilemma?

Was it there in my parents, behind the covers of books, or by experience in living—if I did in that other world? Being ejected robbed me of all that I loved and desired.

Why did I have to leave my sanctuary? Did they hate me so?

I heard their voices plotting against me—urging me to come on home. Home? I was home! And it was very near and dear to me. Here I had every need fulfilled. Here I could burp or sleep and no one cared.

Here I could kick to my heart's content and to heck with the consequences. No one told me to stop it. In fact, I think the person rather enjoyed being kicked. Little did I know at the time that it would be the

only time I could really let go and be my own demanding self. Conformity. That's what was expected of me.

Quit it! I don't want to leave my warm place, no matter what.

You're gonna be sorry.. You know that? You're gonna be sorry you made me leave my world for yours. Think of all the work you could save.

What makes you think it's better?

Aw, shudup.

I won't ever do what you say, only what you do. I like doing. I like to move and stretch and kick, and it doesn't make any difference what season it is. I can just let go and be me—myself—whatever it is you think I shouldn't be.

There you go again, forcing me to leave my warm place.

How many times I got to say it? I like where I am. I might be on Poverty Row here, but I like my kind of poverty.

If you think you're tiring, think of what it's doing to me. Feel like I've been washing and ironing all night.

I'm losing, you hear? Why're you doing this to me? Well, I can do without that kind of love.

No way, Jose! Will not! Never!

I will? Well, that remains to be seen. It's harsh and cruel and nobody loves me out there.

They do? They love me and care for me? I believe that just like I believe I'm never gonna be born. Yeah. I know. I'm fighting a losing battle. Don't do that. Don't.

Now you've done it! I'm gonna make you sorry.

Crying?

Sure, I'm bawling. Wha'd you expect? You would too if somebody slapped your tender rear like that.

What you hugging me for?

You love me? You don't know the meaning of the word. What I wish is you'd hurry and get my feedbag. I'm hungry enough to eat barbecued rat tails...being born is hard. I'm...all...tuckered...out. ■