

# UNIT 29



*Artwork by Phil Barrows*

*Story by Eireene Nealand*

His stuff's been locked up in storage for thirty-six years, unit 29. Sam hardly remembers what's in there by now. That's how bad that marriage was. The only thing he's retained from their fights is a missing tooth. No, she never hit him, and he never hit her, but during one silly spat about flushing the toilet and forgetting the seat, he ground his teeth so hard one in the back broke. That's how he knew it had to be over. Laid-back in the dentist's chair, pumped full of Novocain, and unable to laugh, he knew he was losing a big piece of himself. So, he never went back to the storage unit where

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they shoved it all when they walked away from the mortgage and lost the house. He must have lost the key too during some long blacked-out night. They divorced, and he forgot to pay, but his wife was also on the billing statement. She, too, had her stuff there, and now that she's remarried, she's moving her stuff out. Time to dissolve this last bond, so what if he's forgot all those things he had wanted to save: gun oil, old tennis shoes, some box of records he'd loved as a teen - what use are they now? "I hope you don't expect me to lug it all to the dumpster for you," his ex-wife says before they hang up. Of course, he'd been straining to hear the background noise. "Who's over there?" "Just get off your lazy bum for a change. You owe me that much." She hangs up before he can tell whether it's a man or a dog. For a while, he paces about in the ratty condo where he lives now. A few hours over the weekend, sure, he's got the time to spare, and of course, there's that leap of hope when your ex-wife calls, the almost mother of your almost child, and needs something from you. In respect for all those years, he gets in the car and drives to the spot, despite the fact that she's let him know in advance that she won't be there. "You have 24 hours," she had said. "I want it left clean," and he gets out of his rusty old car, and obeys this last wish because out of all that he's blacked from his mind, he remembers this: he never bothered to write his name on the sides of the boxes or on the top. It's gonna be worth it - she can still tell what's his.