**THE NERD**by Larry Shue  *Willum*

Six days. Has it been just six days? To think—only a week ago, the day before my birthday (*he gives a sad little laugh*) Tansy was leaving, the hotel design was being rejected and rejected...I found out I was being audited by the IRS—and in my folly I imagined myself unhappy. He ... he follows me. He seems to have unlimited time, unlimited funds — brother Bob\*s life savings, I guess — he takes an interest in my work, he goes with me into town. The other day — I\*m not sure I can even talk about this yet — the other day, I had to take a commuter flight to St. Louis—that\*s where they\*re building the outside elevator for the Regency — and Rick wanted to come along. So I said, well, okay, it won\*t be much fun, but—. So, Rick came along. Everything\*s fine, he\*s sitting next to me on the plane, a DC-8, I think. He\*s wearing a little pilot\*s hat he bought at the airport; he\*s leafing through a bound copy of *Redbook.* Then suddenly — suddenly the plane starts shaking, the safety-belt lights come on — people are in fact starting to get alarmed. So what happens in the middle of this? Rick jumps up, stands in the middle of the aisle, and shouts. *(Finding it difficult to say.)* and shouts — "Urinate! . . . Urinate, or your kidneys will explode!" Honest to God. And I think—I mean I\*m really pretty sure — some people *did.* I mean, he was wearing this dumb little pilot\*s hat, and that white shirt and tie he always wears. And, you know, in a panic situation like that—. Anyway, naturally, the next thing we hear is the pilot saying, "We experienced a little turbulence back there but we\*re out of it now, and we\*ll be landing in St. Louis in one minute." And Rick just sat down again, with no idea how many of those people wanted to murder him. I think he only escaped because the ones who really had the grounds didn\*t want to stand up. It\*s a hundred things a day like that. Little things mostly, but they\*re starting to take their toll. I\*m becoming irrational, snappish—.I don’t know what to do.