

Thy necessity

by [Paul Willis](#) in the [June 3, 2021](#) issue

Our friend Greg was two weeks shy
of his lingering end when he called to say
he was so sorry we had lost our golden retriever.

You see, he had lost a retriever himself
and knew the private pain of it.

Then there was John, my former colleague,
who, when given his own death sentence,
found a way to console the young oncologist,
telling her what a good job she had done,
and how he was sure it must have been hard
to share the news. How to account

for such men, such moments? Deflection?
Denial? That, of course, but something
deeper and truer as well. Sir Philip Sidney,
mortally wounded in the thigh at Zutphen,
handed his canteen of water to the soldier
sprawled beside him in the field

and said, for pity of his groans,
Thy necessity is yet greater than mine.