

Once

by [Mark S. Burrows](#) in the [August 11, 2021](#) issue

Look, it wasn't always like this.
Once, we presumed we knew what
was at stake, what right was and
wrong; we imagined this had to
do with something as old-fashioned
as truth, and as durable, presuming
we all felt this separately, together.
Once, we assumed we belonged
to each other as a natural duty and
an inborn right, not thinking how
it might all go wrong, how even
something as simple as our breath
might unwittingly harm others
through the stealth of an unseeable
virus, and how our silences assent
to what our eyes refused to see;
once, we thought the world would
be as it is—just or unjust—without
regard for what we might or might
not do and how we longed to be,
once. It was always like this.