The distant rustle of a tusker emerging one morning from the forests of Nepal. The crack of the shifting expanses of ice in northern Mongolia. The swirl of mist around a lantern atop Hong Kong Island. The squeaky whistle of diving kites over the holy waters of Varanasi.

This book of images is a personal look at places of silence, stillness and space where I have found peace and meaning. It is a search for the magic and the miracle that lie within the smallest things that surround us. Moments of life filled with richness, waiting for us to pull the reins, stop and take notice.

When you look down into the magnificence of the Nubra Valley in the Himalayan ranges it’s easy to overlook the family of white doves flying just below the mist line. There is so much going on, so much to see, so much to think about and do in our busy minds. But once you start paying attention to all the smaller things in the much wider canvas, the doves are just as breathtaking as the thousand-year-old monastery clinging to the cliff’s edge. The passing clouds filled with ice and rain and the arrival of the first soft light over the snowy mountains are miracles for us to watch with wonder.

As a photographer, your senses are sharpened and you start seeing with your soul, along with your eyes. The fog within clears, and you can find truth through the viewfinder of your camera. It’s a moment of time that is created just for you: a wonderful gift waiting for you to collect and carry with you on your life journey. These moments will go on to shape how you see the world and, I believe, will have a profound impact on the art you make in faraway lands at another time.

Noticing the dance of the Arctic winds turn and twist the mane of a white horse on a frozen lake one morning in Mongolia will influence how and what you see in the blue gum forests of Queensland. This I know with all my heart to be true, and I try to follow the dotted lines that connect all of these things as one.

These are the moments I seek as the days go by. These are the images that give me the greatest satisfaction. Simple, spectacular, mundane and the miracle of ordinary life.

My hope is that the viewer will pause, slow down and take notice. Pay attention to the small, magical things that are happening within each one of the images on these pages and find your own place within them. There we can meet in silence—be still, and watch with wonder.

Palani Mohan
There are moments when the world holds its breath, and we do, too; perhaps they’re akin to the moments when we find a new love or are rendered speechless by a sudden flight of birds. The head is stilled, the heart is quickened and we’re on high alert; we step out of our daily selves, and touch something that makes us believe in wonder, even if we have no need to put a word or explanation to it.

These moments, of absolute stillness, tell the secret story of our lives. Our resumes, our calendars chart the everyday rites and commitments we observe, but underneath that is a shadow story, of the moments that transform us.

I think I recognize some of the places in these images—Hanoi, Varanasi, Mongolia—but the names are not important; this is a collection of those moments when we’re out of time and place. They can come, as Palani Mohan shows, in the middle of a crowd, they can come when there seems to be almost nothing there.

My wife once took a picture of my little blue folding chair on a thin terrace and a book and a cup of tea beside it; I told her it was the deepest portrait of me I’d ever seen. So I rejoiced to see a similar image in this book. That transporting quiet is hidden in the fabric of every day, and almost every location: a lazy summer afternoon in a garden, the tiptoed journey through a jungle to see what might be hiding there, the sudden jolt of spaciousness that knocks the wind out of you. We all know that attention is the sweetest fruit of prayer, or of love; here you see how keeping still may be the surest way of being truly moved.

Pico Iyer
Witnessing the photographer’s act of witness is, for a writer like me, somewhat humbling. The indefatigable word is defeated time after time as the visceral image reigns. The colours of light and life wash over us, supreme.

Here, however, the light dims. It is an elusive guide, escorting us through subtle regions. Then comes the silence. A quiet rebellion against the noise of data, of argument and distraction. For here, the eye is still, the breath shallow, and we emerge, blinking from the dark of pandemics and other emergencies. Light’s texture flowers immaculate. Ever so gently, ever so silently, we are returned to the beauty of our planet and the extraordinary creatures that share their fragile eternity with us.

Glimmers of hope. Downpours of recognition. It is not a picture anymore. It is a soul that sees and speaks in whispers. A cathedral of silence standing perfectly still.

Christopher Kremmer
To my friends Ana, Chris, Gary, Karen, Nang, Pico and Thomas, and to my dearest Sarah, Charlie and Jaya. Thank you!