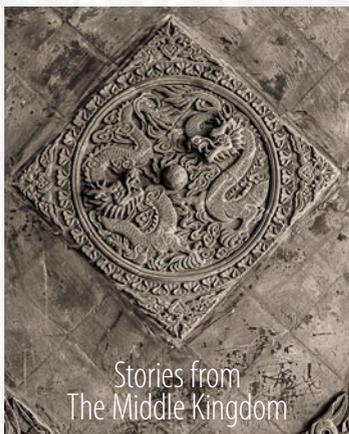




# SKETCHES

*A Chapbook Series by  
Brooks Jensen*



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*The Fisherman with One Eye*

*JBrooks Jensen*

Brooks Jensen

They tell us there are almost 7 billion people sharing this little planet of ours—7 billion stories of life and love and loss. The problem with photography is that it allows us to know there *is* a story but often denies us the details. I suppose, to be honest, it is not photography to blame, but our own lack of courage.

A friend of mine is fearless about such things. We joke that if she walks into a party and spies an unknown someone across the room who has a patch over their eye, within half an hour she'll know the entire story of how, why, and when—in some detail. Too bad she was not with me on that bitterly cold January day in China on the banks of the Yellow River.

I had asked our translator and driver if he knew of a fishing village nearby where we could make some photographs. I had visions of cliché, but picturesque junks and straw hats in a setting sun. When he said he'd located a village, I was filled with anticipation. An hour later, in the middle of barren winter cornfields, we turned down a country lane.

The fishing village was announced by a carved wooden carp at the head of the road. As far as I could see,



there was no river, no dock, no boats. The village itself appeared deserted, no doubt because the temperature was significantly below freezing. The fields of frozen ponds—presumably with the fish sleeping below the



ice—were covered with row after row of snow drifts in wind-blown patterns.

We stopped in the middle of the dirt road to make a photograph of one of the buildings. Suddenly the door opened and smiling villagers invited us inside where it was warm and comfortable. The building was a store with one almost-empty counter containing a few boxes of cigarettes and a couple of bottles of Chinese whiskey. The shelves on the wall were barren except for a few odds and ends. The men huddled around a small stove burning corncocks to warm the room.

As I photographed the group, the one-eyed fisherman suddenly posed as though he knew this was a moment of importance. He stared directly into the lens and waited for me to finish making the photograph. We smiled and both nodded, the only language we shared. I wanted to know his story, but all I have is his portrait.







# *Sketches*

*An ePublication Series by  
Brooks Jensen*

## *The Fisherman with One Eye*

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