



KOKORO

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An Ocean Conversation



Perhaps Lafcadio Hearn will not protest too much if I paraphrase (almost word for word) from *Kokoro*, his 1895 book of Japanese life. He explains this important Japanese term far better than I ever could:

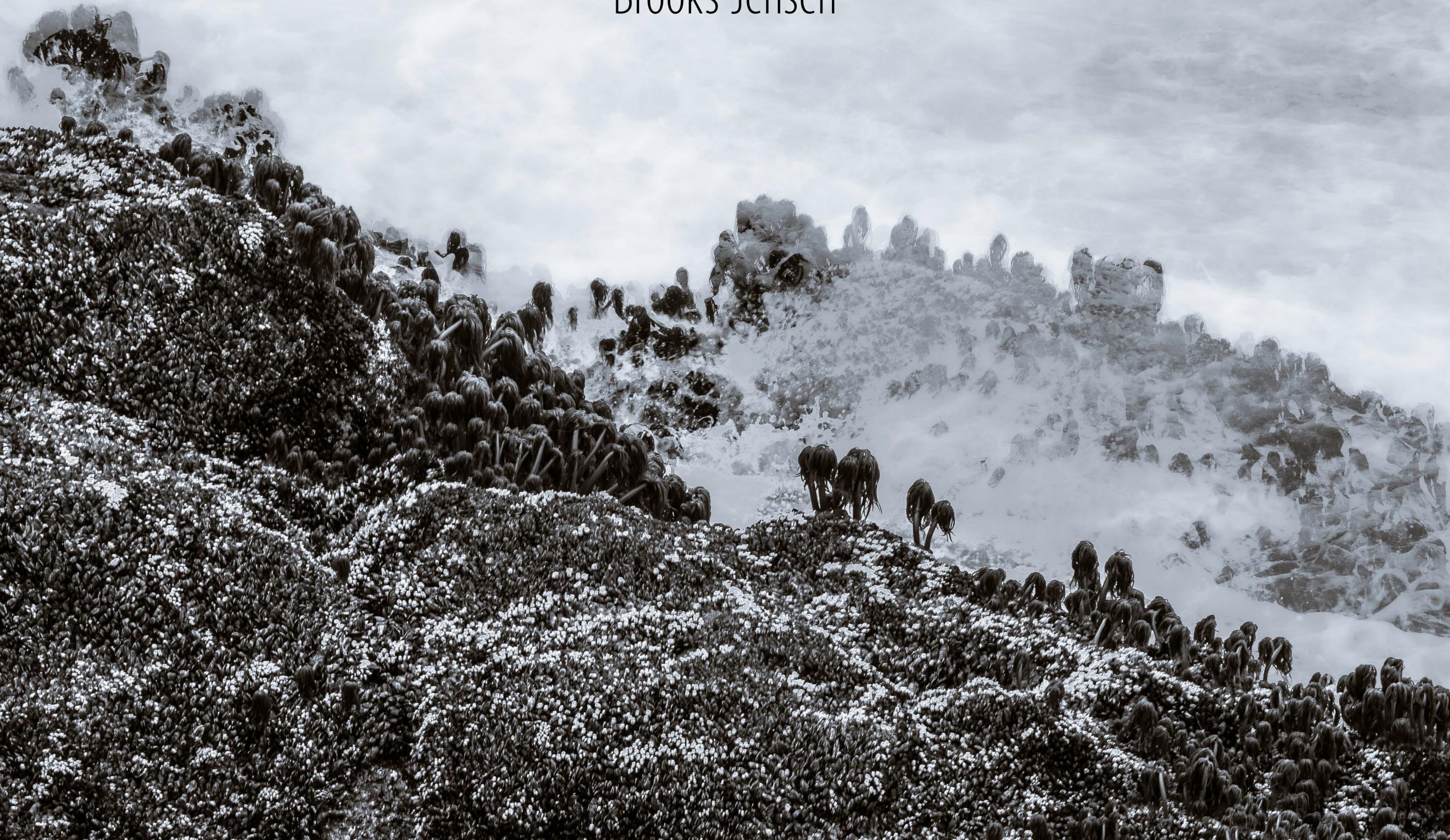
The entries comprising this volume treat of the inner rather than the outer life, — for which reason they have been grouped under the title *Kokoro* (heart). Written with the above character, this word signifies also *mind*, in the emotional sense; *spirit*; *courage*; *resolve*; *sentiment*; *affection*; and *inner meaning*, — just as we say in English, 'the heart of things.'

#168

Sea Palms

Sea Palms

Brooks Jensen





























The Smartest Person I Knew

A One-Picture Story



My father was born in land-locked Idaho; I was born in Wyoming. Neither of us were coastal people.

After we moved to Oregon when I was eight years old, I remember walking through the surf for the first time and asking him where the sand came from. "It comes from the stars," he said. "But how does it get *here*?" I pressed. "It's washed here by the waves." Using my best eight-year-old logic, "Out of the sky?" "I guess," he said, "Where do you think the rain comes from?" I remembering being amazed how smart my Dad was.

#169

Big Wave

Big Wave

Brooks Jensen



A big wave is, of course, the
Ocean's way of saying, "Hello!
Yoo-hoo, I'm here!"

It's only the polite thing to do
to wave back and
return the greeting.

Hello, Ocean.



























The Never-ending Surf

A One-Picture Story



Wave after wave, everyday, every night, every season, never resting.

We are oblivious, except for those few moments when we stare,
mesmerized at the constancy
and imagine those eternal waves over the billions of years.

#170

Pacific Skies

Pacific Skies

Brooks Jensen

Our Last Beach

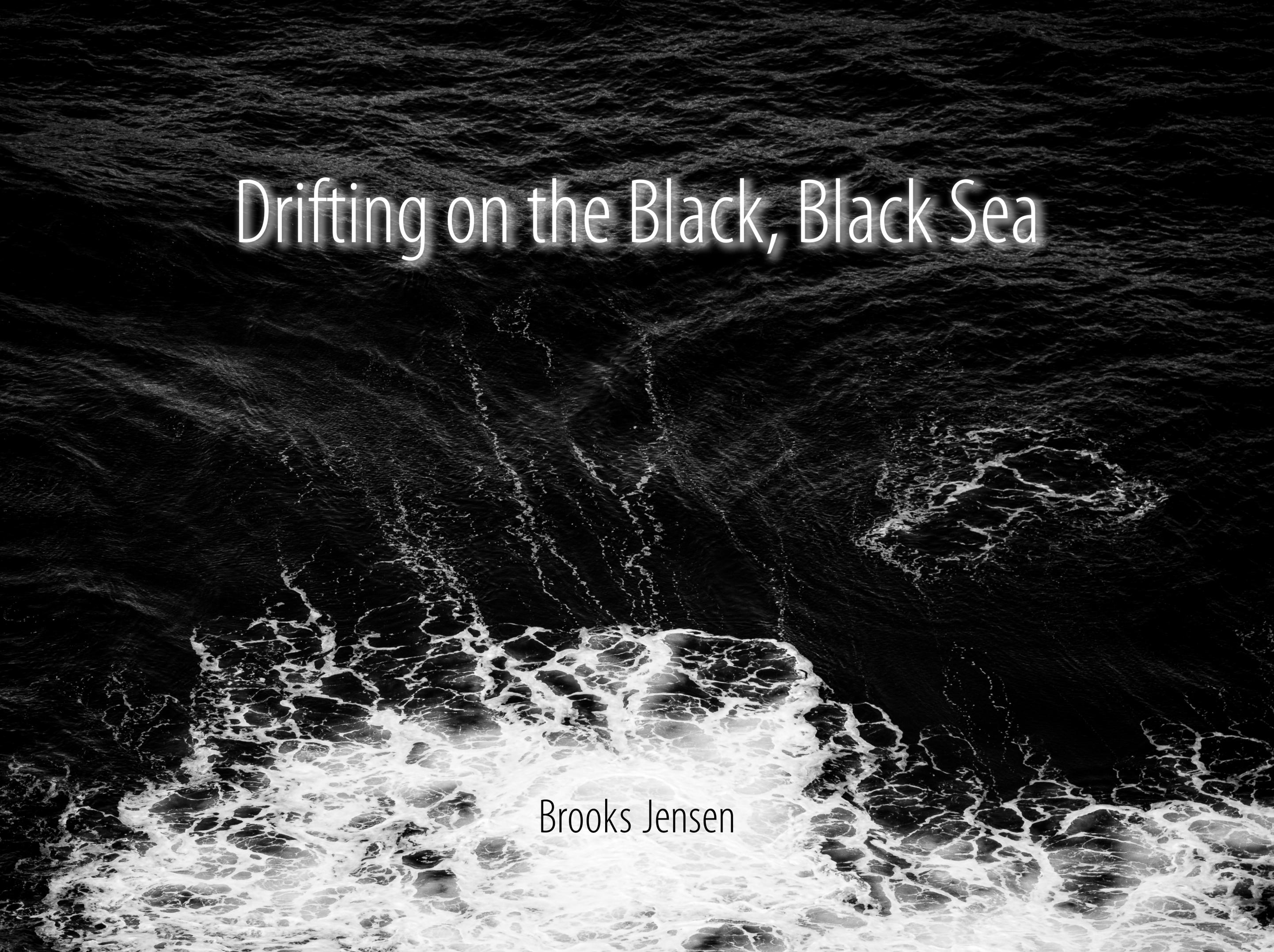
A One-Picture Story

A year after she was gone, I returned to the last beach we'd walked on. The waves rolled in as they had always done; the gulls flew overhead as they'd always done. Everything was the same, except she was missing. I added my tears to the ocean and remembered the touch of her hand.



#171

Drifting on the Black, Black Sea

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a boat's wake in the Black Sea. The water is dark and textured with small waves. The wake consists of two main channels of white foam that branch out from a central point, creating a complex, cellular pattern of white foam against the dark water. The text "Drifting on the Black, Black Sea" is overlaid in white, glowing font across the upper portion of the image.

Drifting on the Black, Black Sea

Brooks Jensen







Is it exaggerating the metaphor too much to say that we are all drifting above the black, impenetrable sea?

floating

not quite aimless, but. . .





guided by currents we do not control

living to rhythms we are powerless to resist

tossed and roiled by karma we cannot understand. . .



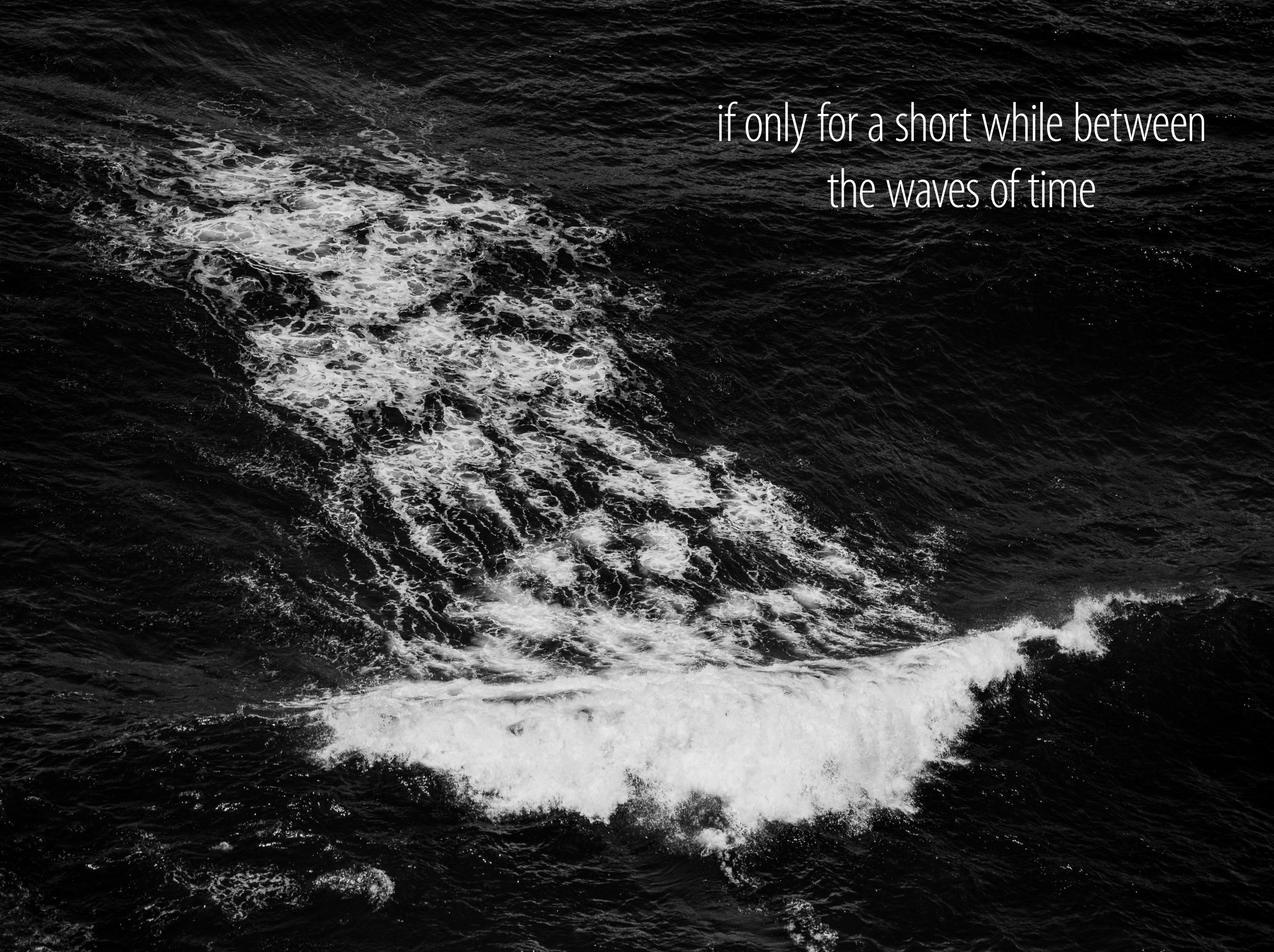


surfacing above the dark,
a pattern in the chaos







An aerial, high-angle photograph of a boat's wake in dark, choppy water. The wake is a prominent, bright white line of foam and spray that starts from the bottom center and extends towards the top left. The surrounding water is dark and textured with small waves. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

if only for a short while between
the waves of time





like neurons adrift in our own life

like galaxies in the measureless void

carried along

from somewhere unknown

to somewhere unknown











alive, like the oceans

alive, on the oceans

formed and shaped by the winds

over the black, black sea



Notes

Sea Palms

These images exist — indeed, were *made* — with gratitude for Wynn Bullock. One of his famous images is of sea palms clinging to a rock amidst the waves. I can't see sea palms without thinking of his image.

Two of these also exist — indeed, were *made* — with gratitude for Oliver Gagliani. He did a project he called his “strips” where he would expose an entire roll of 35mm film with pictures of flower blossoms at a street stand. Then he would roll the film back to the beginning and then expose another 36 images on top of the ones in the first pass. These layered image were totally serendipitous, yet fascinating. I used a similar technique on two of the sea palm images.

Tech notes: This is a subject that requires just the right timing — both for the waves and for the tides. A long lens helps, too. All of them were shot with a telephoto zoom near its longest focal length.

Big Wave

I've recently dubbed these kinds of

shots with the term “orgasmograph.” The peak moment of action with the highest reach of the splash. They are fun to do, mostly because it's just fun to watch. I'm not really convinced this is great art as much as it is about patience and timing. In some regards, it doesn't matter — as long as they are fun to do!

Tech notes: The slowest shutter speed in this series was 1/500th of a second. Over half of them were at 1/8000th of a second. All of them were captured using “burst mode” with my camera. I'm just not that good at pressing the cable release at the exact moment. I figure this is a prime example of why burst mode is an important tool in our arsenal.

Pacific Skies

A lovely, sunny day on the Oregon coast. I pulled out a lawn chair and sat enjoying an influx of vitamin D and the gentle surf on the sands before me. A short nap (always productive to the creative process). As I roused from my slumbers, I looked up at the pale blue sky and immediately conceived this short project. Originally, I thought this was going to be b/w, but as I processed the images, that pale blue kept pulling me back. Eventually, I heard the Muse

whispering, so it became a color project in spite of my initial intentions.

Tech notes: All of these were shot from the same beach, in the course of about an hour. Sometimes it's best to just sit and wait for the art to come to you.

Drifting on the Black, Black Sea

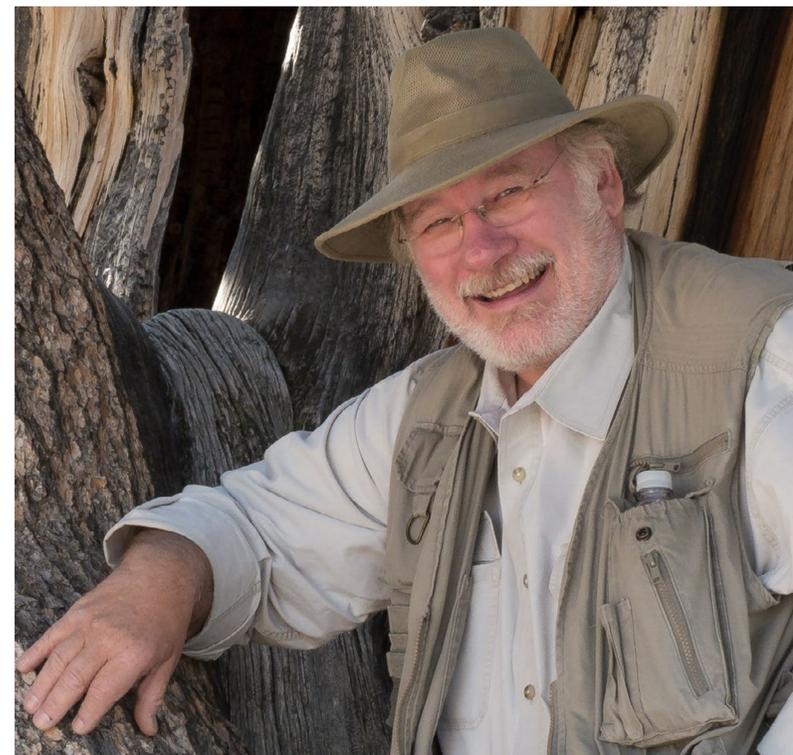
Ivory foam on a blue-green sea. I wasn't crazy about the colors, but I was intrigued and entertained by the foam patterns that were constantly changing with every new wave. They were a roiling abstract dance playing out right in front of me. Lots and lots of exposures, but no “content” spoke to me until months later. In one of those odd flashes of inspiration, I became aware of the metaphor I felt about this scene. In this project, there is more “philosophy” than I usually use. Oh, well. Art of any merit must come from the heart, or it isn't art.

Tech notes: Curiously enough, if you expose for the highlights in the foam, the sea becomes quite dark. I used this to my advantage to darken the sea to black without losing all the darkish tones. Black and near-black are not the same thing.

Folios, Chapbooks, Prints

Support the artist!

For over 30 years, Brooks has shared his photographic lessons, failures, inspiration, creative path — and more than a few laughs. If you've enjoyed his free *Kokoro* PDFs publications, or been a long-time listener to his free audio commentaries (his weekly podcast *On Photography and the Creative Life*, or his daily *Here's a Thought* commentaries), here is your chance to tell him how much you appreciate his efforts. Support the artist!



Choose whichever level of support fits your appreciation and pocketbook. We thank you, he thanks you, and here's looking forward to the exciting content that is yet to come in all our *LensWork* publications and media as Brooks continues exploring this creative life.

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\$1000 Patron of the Arts - You'll receive a special thank you of, well, you'll see!

[You can donate to support Brooks' creative life using this link.](#) Thanks!



Brooks Jensen is a fine-art photographer, publisher, workshop teacher, and writer. In his personal work he specializes in small prints, handmade artist books, and digital media publications.

He is the owner, co-founder (in 1993, with his late wife, Maureen), editor, and publisher of the award winning *LensWork*, one of today's most respected and important periodicals in fine art photography. With subscribers in more than 70 countries, Brooks' impact on fine art photography is truly worldwide. His long-running weekly podcasts on art and photography are heard over the Internet by thousands every day. All 1,300+ podcasts are available at [LensWork Online](https://www.lenswork.com), the LensWork membership website. He also publishes a daily *Here's a Thought...* video with short inspiration for creative photographers.

LensWork Publishing is also at the leading edge in multimedia and digital media publishing with the *LensWork Tablet Edition*, and *LensWork Extended Computer Edition* — a PDF-based, media-rich expanded version of the magazine.

Brooks is the author of fourteen books about photography and creativity: *Photography, Art, & Media* (2016); *The Creative Life in Photography* (2013); *Letting Go of the Camera* (2004); *Single Exposures* (3 books in a series, random observations on art, photography and creativity); *Looking at Images* (2014); *The Best of the LensWork Interviews* (2016); *Seeing in SIXES* (2016); *Seeing in SIXES* (2017); *Seeing in SIXES* (2018); *Seeing in SIXES* (2019); and *Our Magnificent Planet* (2020 and 2021).

[Kokoro](https://www.kokoro.com) is a free, bi-monthly PDF e-publication of his personal work and is available (both current and back issues) for download from his [website](https://www.brooks-jensen.com). He has published two printed monographs of his photography, [Made of Steel](https://www.madeofsteel.com) (2012), and [Dreams of Japan](https://www.dreamsofjapan.com) (2021).

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