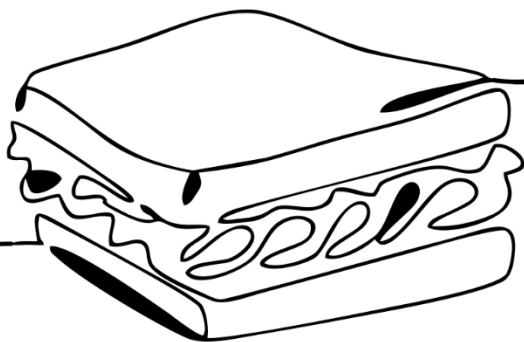


# sand wich

life.

love.

everything in between.



QUIST MIRACLE

# SANDWICH

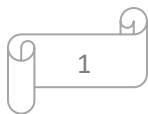
(LIFE, LOVE AND EVERYTHING IN-BETWEEN)

a collection of poems

by

Miracle Quist.

**INK**spiredng



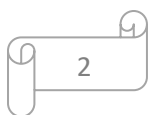
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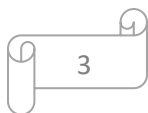
## **Dedication**

To the One who gives life to all.

To everyone who still believes in hope, faith & love.

To all who doubt.

To all who believe & yet still doubt.



## **Acknowledgement**

I want to thank God for the gift of poetry.

To I.Q for igniting the fire of poetry that has never gone off since when I picked up the pen to write, I say thank you. I am in your debt.

To Jide Badmus (Daddy G.Hoe) for your kind words and your ability to successfully strip me naked with them.

To everyone who has in one way or the other been my muse, I am eternally grateful for being the medium upon which I found expression.

## **Blurb**

Bread, spread, filling, garnish, bread—the typical structure of the traditional sandwich. The beauty of any sandwich is in the spread, filling and garnish, how they all are merged and are blended to give the savoury taste that is the pleasure of the taste buds.

Life, love, loss, death—the typical structure of human existence. The beauty of life is in how we live in the 'in-betweens', the fillings, garnish and the spread. They are the questions that need to be answered before we all depart from life;

How we navigate the highlands of love and the valleys of hate and apathy

How we define rebirth and what being reborn bodes for us

How we define pain and how it in turn defines and refines us

How much friendships we nurture and hold dear,

How we cherish memories and how they shape us

For all intents, and for all purposes, life is a sandwich. We come, we live and we go.

Miracle Quist, via his book, seeks to bring to our minds, the reality of what it means to have life, to live it and to lose it.

**—Ivans Quist**

## Because Love is a Game I've Lost: A Foreword

There is a deep awareness of our *socialsphere* in this collection of poems.

Sandwich opens with *Egocentric*, a poem which addresses domestic violence with an antithetic depiction of control and the delusive side of ego. Miracle, in two contrasting stanzas tells a tale of a man whose manhood *rests in the palms of his hands*, whose wife *no longer cowers in fear* because she came to a realisation that the weight of his manhood resides in his fists.

The alacrity in the movement of the poet's narratives means that the readers are in anticipation mood all through, strapped in safety harness for they do not know what would come up on them at each bend or turn. The pages quickly roll into another form of abuse—sexual assault and incest. A son comes to terms with the fact that the father is a monster, the author of his mother's woes.

*reality is a woman*

*with a future strapped behind her*

*...she drags two more like a sack of regrets*

*all replicas of her father*

The author's metaphors are light and rugged, crafted to carry weights. He handles delicately, his play on words and dishes subtle rhymes. The beauty of Quist's metaphors is their ability to be intense yet weightless— not dragging readers into the depth of the darkness they so fittingly express.

*Sacrificion* talks of a father pushed towards suicide because he could not cater for his family— for his son who now carries a burden heavier than his age.

*I remember you*

*talking to a bottle,*

*you were telling him*

*of how tired you'd become*

*of the battle within your mind*

The collection largely features a father who hurts his wife and is mostly absent in the life of his son. It features a boy who still mourns a distant or dead father— who recalls how he'd had to stand up for his abused mum at a tender age, when he was probably still learning to stand.

*Victim* is a gripping account, a reaching back into memory for boys whose innocence were wrecked, who had to take matters into their own hands in pursuit of freedom— in pursuit of light.

*When I clocked twelve*

*& he decided it was time to strike*

*so, I'll be the gong that echoes screams*

*into the shadows of his insanity.*

The poems in this book largely recount losses. A chronicle of a boy sandwiched between struggling with an abusive or an absent father and unfulfilled longing for love or a lover. Thus, the poet swings between speaking of vulnerabilities and desire. Whether he is stroking memories or sniffing the spoor of hope, pain is vividly etched on these pages.



The writer realises that there could be a level of ignorance at play in our expression of love— there could, on the other hand, too, be a misinterpretation of profound emotions. *Smokes* paints father in a different light— flawed, yet loving!

*Pa wrote me a song  
about his failures//says he doesn't  
want me repeating them.  
So, he moulds me with whips  
& threatens my belly...*

The poem highlights a shift in generational parenting styles too. For a typical old generation Nigerian parent, love is cruel. For them, heat purifies gold, so, they are steadfast with whips and unending nagging.

*Of Strange Men That Bear My Father's Face* tows the same path— shows the shortcomings of a father who would do anything (blurring the line between hustling and begging) to put food on table for his family. All through this poem, the image of food and grief blend— sack of potatoes, sack of regrets, plate of pleas...

*Momma told him she was hungry & all he had  
was a bowl of love & his voice*

The poet's diction is simple and deliberately so— pertinent and relatable. His verses, laced with witty paradoxes, seem effortlessly fluid, each line existing symbiotically with the next.

## **Jide Badmus**

Author, *What Do I Call My Love for Your Body?*

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*of life, home & everything in-between*

## **Egocentric**

there's an echo  
the size of your ego  
that tells you that the weight  
of your manhood  
rests in the palms of your hands. that's why  
her face becomes the canvas  
with which you paint your anger  
in strokes & blood.

there's an echo  
bigger than the size of your ego  
that spells freedom. that's why  
she no longer cowers in fear  
for she knows, deep down  
that the weight of your manhood  
rests in the palm of your hands.

she's no longer scared  
to leave for an echo of hope & freedom.

## What I see when I drink my mother's grey hairs

it was a dark night  
when I harvested the cobwebs  
that grew on mama's scalp  
& brewed them into a strong drink  
so I can face reality & tell you what I see  
When I drink her grey hair.

reality is a woman  
with a future strapped behind her  
like a burden waiting to fall off  
at redemption. she drags two more like a sack of regrets  
all replicas of her father who spat seeds  
within her & made her reap shame.  
her feet were as old as the road she's plied  
since she saw her father's reflection  
in the bulge of her belly. I've seen her make jokes  
with demons & spirits, so it's no wonder  
when she laughs I say she's mad,  
because her reality has always been the sound  
of my gavel against my illusions.

reality is me  
staring in the mirror  
where I seem to see my father  
paint a picture of me peeling away his skin  
from my face so that I no longer look like him.  
so, I took away the mirror  
so I'd not remember my sins & wear condoms upon my  
head  
catching my seeds within my thoughts

& flush them down the drain so my sins will no longer  
judge me  
as my fingers rejoice at the black stripes of freedom  
they've painted upon my face telling me;  
I'm a rebel, a betrayer of words, of kin, of skin & bones &  
future & past  
that I'm no longer my father's son.

reality is a broken image  
of disproportioned illusions  
with which I see my world  
& I am a monster staring deep into its cold dark shadows.

## **Of strange men that bear my father's face**

when you go out  
into the marketplace  
help look for my father in the faces of strange men.

you'll see him hunched over  
with a sack of potatoes  
becoming the summit of his existence.  
watch as his legs become broken crutches  
supporting his weight, a mountain of worries, some sacks  
of regrets  
& do not forget the sack of potatoes.

if you do not see him there  
you'll find him huddled under a barrage  
of insults meant to bruise his dignity  
& him clutching tightly to a life  
that no longer holds meaning only a plate of pleas  
so his belly, tonight, won't grumble out of neglect.  
my father no longer knows shame  
he parted ways with him the first time  
momma told him she was hungry & all he had  
was a bowl of love & his voice.

my father would move on the handles  
of a wheelbarrow bearing a bag of beans, a wounded pride  
& a breath of what ifs.

if still you do not see him there, wait  
my father will call you  
with his hands wide open welcoming  
you with songs of pity



locked within crystals of pain that stream down his face.  
my father has given up on hope  
he searches for it in the palms of strangers  
holding one- or two-naira notes meant for him.  
my father has his share of your money you see  
& he will let you know with a song of pleas.

if he doesn't come to you  
when you go home, you'll see my father  
come alive in the face of your father.  
behind his smile, look closely  
you'll see lines that tell a different tale  
of how he puts food on the table.  
my father will tell you in his silence  
how he wishes for death to come swiftly  
for he doesn't know how to live anymore  
when all his life  
he's lived for me or is it you.

## **If the past was a broken song**

picture a girl—  
me—

her shadows  
broken into a thousand fragments  
threatening to spill open  
the past she has buried  
deep within caskets of trauma  
all because she chose to trust (*a little too much*)

picture her again  
this time with a  
fountain of crimson waters  
erupting from a torn veil  
meant to protect her holies of holies.

now  
picture her  
on her knees trying to  
pick up her broken pieces,  
but all she sees through each piece  
is pain.

## Scarification

it's noon  
I stand, a weight of inscriptions  
rest upon my tongue.

my voice is gone.

I think about  
how you left & it forms  
upon my tongue. another hieroglyph  
too sad for anyone to understand.

I remember you  
talking to a bottle.  
you were telling him  
of how tired you'd become  
of the battle within your mind  
of the need to end the pain. you told him  
you couldn't live in a world  
where you couldn't provide a meal  
square enough to fit  
my hollow belly.

he opened up his heart  
& poured out his soul to you in bits— all 40 of it.  
he sang to you a song of safety & off freedom. But

he never told you about the scars.

I wear them now mama

like weighty inscriptions  
upon my tongue,

upon  
my  
heart.

## Victim

holey  
to one whose innocence  
was exchanged with shame like I was  
when I clocked twelve  
& he decided it was time to strike  
so I'd be the gong that echoes screams  
into the shadows of his insanity.

I've known thieves  
all my life— those who rob me  
of my pride, burying my dignity  
in the broken silence of solitude & darkness.

they bear different names each time  
—daddy, uncle, master...

my voice has become  
memories that shudder each time  
I hear the clock strike twelve  
giving life to the pebbles of tears  
that sink to the depths of a heart  
torn— no! —shredded by an evil act  
that bore no gospel.

my name is victim  
I was once a memory but today  
I've become an anthology of haunted dreams.

## Rebirth

when night comes  
I wrap darkness around my head  
cradling silence in my arms  
so I'll be able  
to drift easily when the ferryman comes  
to take me to his abode  
lurking deep within my soul.

he reveals to me  
the demons I've locked away  
in secret chambers that must's see the light.

they each bear names  
of my treacherous deeds  
murder, hate, rape, theft, racism...

oft times I see their screaming faces  
upon my skin  
having darkness for eyes.

each dawn  
I'm reborn with screams.  
my bed becomes an ocean  
screaming of guilt.

## **Reverse**

*(In honour of Uwaila Vera Omozuwa)*

a boy  
sees the world in reverse.

evil wears the innocent face  
of a 22-year-old.  
her only crime—  
reading in a haven  
guarded by blind knights.

good becomes  
a picture dusted with filters  
of egos waiting to be liked  
by fingers so fast  
they forget what it's like to be human.

the boy  
sees the world in reverse  
when he looks into the mirror  
& finds you staring back at him.

## **Thorn reflection**

*(To be read in parts and as a whole)*

hypocrisy is  
painted white  
yet it's insidious lips  
like thorns beneath a  
rose's petal  
reveal a darkness  
haunting you

a chameleon  
looking innocent  
speaks of being  
harmless but  
catches you off  
guard,  
tears down bridges  
of trust  
forever



## Live stream

a mother screams  
as the body of her daughter  
becomes a canvas twisted men  
paint with violent strokes.

a young girl stares  
into the mirror  
& sees a dream wash away  
replaced by eleven men. eleven beasts.  
she now bears their mark.  
her soul seared.

a young boy  
hides his tears in the folds  
of his garment  
for he's been taught  
how to be a man right before  
learning how to live.  
he smiles like he's been taught how to.  
like a broken figurine.

sometimes we see pain  
& inscribe them upon our veins  
so that when we bleed  
the world will see our streams

&  
maybe. if it cares, watch

## **Echoes, pain & smiles**

*(for those living with sickle cell)*

when my cries  
echo from the hollow  
in my bones. read the stories  
written in pain as I writhe//my body-  
a tourniquet for my  
sanity

seeping away into the chaos.

& when my pain  
seems to frustrate you  
like a drunk engine,  
watch as I tell a tale  
in words locked within my soul  
seeking to escape in my tears.

I never asked for this pain.  
I never asked for this life  
yet I paint gratefulness in the curves of my smile

but when my cries  
echo from the hollows in my bones  
read the stories written in pain  
as written...

## **Give me darkness, I'll give you light**

it was a cold night.

I saw her trying to set what seemed  
to be a shadow of herself on fire.

she told me  
the darkness weighs  
a million stories lost  
in the maze of a voice she never knew how to master.  
that all she's ever known was how  
to paint a curve  
into the hardness of a sad heart  
forced to become the ice that now thaws,  
dousing the fire she's been trying all night to light.

then I helped her too // in a way // my body  
became the flame with which she saw herself truly for  
the broken person she always was // but at least now,  
she can fix herself for

there's light.

## Smokes

I built a world  
from smokes & puffs  
with each drag unfolding to reveal  
who I think I am.

Pa wrote me a song  
about his failures, says he doesn't  
want me repeating them.  
so, he moulds me with whips  
& threatens my belly  
with a hunger I've known too well  
to be scared by it.

Ma told me stories in silences.  
punc.tua.ted  
with sobs at every syllable every now & then.  
she doesn't want me  
to end up like Pa.  
she moulds me with her nags  
& bars so high I can barely breathe.

so don't judge me  
for finding peace in smokes— & mirrors  
won't reveal who I am  
for my parts are many

& I've just begun acting.

## Really?

I've sold my body  
to the world for she bought me  
with a filled belly  
& oiled my parched skin with wine.

she kissed my lips with happiness & gave me  
a sixth sense of belonging.

she graced my body with her garments  
& told me there's more.

but wait. before you stab me for unbelief. hear this;

I took my plight & moulded it into stories  
to feed your ears but you swatted them like flies  
you'll buzz me back; after  
you're done with prayers.  
you told me [*God will provide*]  
with a chunk of meat wedged between your teeth.

I waited. you never buzzed  
maybe you're still praying.

so, please pray when she asks for my soul  
I won't say yes too.

## Living

keep today shrouded  
in tainted images that bear  
your father's anger & your mother's pain.  
for with it,  
you'll remember what it feels like  
to see death face to face & watch it run  
towards you. you won't be scared.  
you'll breathe as calmly as the eye of a storm  
& you'll feel a peace within you yet  
you'll hate it for your blood boils. your eyes scream  
murder.  
your face becomes a story  
of imaginations with each turn, a tale of deathly hallows,  
gallows  
& hells.

today is a good/bad day  
live it with death upon your lips

& hope

## **Pa & friendships**

I harvested a truth  
from the lips of my father.

he said that  
true friendship is a double-edged sword  
that rips away the soul  
of a man, leaving him bare.

my father died  
a naked man  
& the world stood watching  
as he lay on the street

bare.

## Pa & an advice on love

thanks for telling me  
to reference her temples  
each morning when I awake.

to take the prayer beads  
wrapped around her nipples  
& whisper a word or two  
(*definitely two, for each of her breasts*).

to bare my scenes  
before entering holy grounds  
to tender worship  
in kisses & high scale moans.

to grace her altar  
swollen with nectar  
& remind her [*myself*]  
that she is a goddess

& I am a worshipper.

her worshipper



## **Pa & a cloud of memories**

when you see  
my father's body evaporate  
into a cloud of memories;

know that I've become a man  
bearing a thousand tears  
half of which are my mother's

when my father's body  
evaporates into a cloud  
of memories.

## **If home was so many things, would I still live?**

I might never get  
the chance to say goodbye  
so each day I wrap my memories  
like a bandage against my bald head  
hoping you'll see them & smile. & maybe cry too.  
I'm sorry if my pains weigh a thousand scars.  
I've worn them too long they've begun  
to feel like home.

for home (*for me*)  
begins with a laughter I'll miss wearing.  
it begins with a friend who promises  
to capture my memories within his tears.  
it begins with the lips of my lover as she wears  
my soul in little kisses so I'll live again in her heart. maybe.  
it begins with a song played upon the hands  
of a clock (*who knew time could sing in countdowns*).  
it begins with three. two. one. friend(s), their stare  
a mirror of a life worth living but never living.  
it begins with me. with a diagnosis.

& then home ends  
with me. a tiny box & a prayer.

*Of love & everything in-between*

## When love becomes

let me show you how  
to stay alive with a cuneiform of home  
hanging around your neck  
to remind you that you're the son of a soil  
watered with sweat & blood.

*(first,)*

pickup a flower the size of the moon  
from the lips of your lover  
make sure it spells hope.  
*(if it doesn't, find another).*

divide it into a million pieces;  
each for the days spent without her  
& to each add a drop of emotions,  
storing them in the chambers of your heart  
where you once wore each other's skin  
with different waves of passion surging through  
your bodies.

*(second)*

when you feel like dying,  
open a chamber & let incense rise  
to grace home hung around your neck  
for only then will you know  
that your lover is home  
hung upon your neck.

## Adam & Eve

I sleep naked  
most of the time.

I allow the coldness  
of the night  
wrap his arms around my buttocks  
& squeeze me into the cradles  
of a land where unicorns exist  
& a version of you too.

I then wake  
clad in nothing but figments  
of my vain imaginings  
of you & I where we laugh, giggle & dance. naked

for I know  
that dreams are not where  
hearts get broken

so, I bare it all for you.

## **The way to a prophethess' heart**

look into her eyes. find a way to have  
her face in the palms of your hands.

tell her how you felt  
the first time you saw her figure  
reflect within your eyes & like a prophet  
you wrote down the vision of what you've seen  
upon your tied tongue biding the time  
when it will be loosed from the shackles of fear.

that she's the dawn;  
revealer of secrets that have plagued your heart  
since you first saw her.

tell her it's time. for prophecy.  
& watch as your tongue unravels mysteries

of how her beauty defies  
the law of imperfection that beset fallen man.

of how you want to love her. all of her  
beyond the borders of the galaxies.

of how you want to plant sunshine in her eyes  
& reap a thousand suns woven delicately  
upon the fabric of her lips

now stop.

& watch as her face slowly drifts  
past your palms, past your fears & your guards

watch as she bathes your lips  
with a thousand visions that's rested upon

her tongue since the first time she saw you.

& then you'll know that she too is a prophetess  
with the heart of a thousand sunshine  
showing you the secret to loving beyond  
the shackles that have always held your tongue.

## Love gone deep

I want you once again  
in my arms holding you close to me  
with the fragrance of beautiful memories  
lingering from the tips of your hair.

your head upon my chest  
& mine upon yours  
as we listen to our hearts  
synchronized by a love that we share;  
with your laugh upon  
my skin as heaven explodes  
in the cavities of your teeth.  
as I relish in the beauty refined  
in the details of your face.

your lips upon mine.  
me tasting every drop  
of emotions sweet as honey defying the laws of gravity  
as you press yourself against me.  
our lips in unison  
our hearts connected as one  
our persons engraved in symphonies.  
of feelings that cannot be expressed.

I want you in my arms once again  
for I have missed you.

all. of. you.



## **Tell me what's real**

we've spoken  
a million words  
bridging the gap that once existed  
between our hearts.

we fooled silence  
& made peace with  
the imperfections we wore  
on our faces like mascara.

our conversations  
took us on an adventure  
& we found ourselves  
within each other's eyes.

but now,  
I feel everything we had  
were just unicorns floating in my head  
& I am wrapped up in a fantasy  
that never was or never will be.

## To be you

tonight.

I want to become one  
with the night. with you.  
enveloping you with silence. I'd take your secrets  
& weave them into tomorrow  
so when you wake  
they become stories that'll put a smile  
across your face.

tonight

I want to be you  
to have your passions  
to see colours through your eyes  
to know what makes you happy  
to know what fills up the sadness that lies beneath your  
eyes  
to feel your pain & have your tears run down my face  
to know what it means to love & be loved by another  
to know how your heart beats & how your eyes flutter.

tonight

I want to be you  
& finally get to know  
if I'm worth it. worth loving by you.

## **Finding me**

we went our ways  
in a maze of emotions  
hoping to find ourselves  
but instead, our paths crossed.                      again.  
& we found each other.

does this mean  
I've found myself too.                      maybe in you

because love is a game I've lost  
over & over I'm not so sure  
what or how it feels to win.

does this mean losing you  
so I can be found again...or                      maybe I'm just  
confused.

## **Death & no hope for tomorrow**

...how can I love you?  
when the hope  
for living tomorrow is held locked up  
in the chambers of a heart  
that knows pain surging through  
with every intake of breath.

I know you leave me breathless  
every time you look at me.  
your stare reaching deep into parts hidden  
beyond the smiles & laughter I delicately weave daily  
into my life. Each stitch becoming undone  
every time I see the moon bloom on your lips.

I can't do this.  
I can't let you love me  
when tomorrow is an uncertainty  
as good as the pains that hold me ransom.

I want to  
but I can't allow myself to love you if  
it would bring you pain  
when this heart stops tomorrow.

## **Spaces & memories**

remind me  
how to recount each day  
within the spaces existing  
between your fingers.

& find solace  
in the warmth of your kisses

## **Addiction**

*(inspired by Esther Chukwu)*

when she speaks  
I'm reminded of a love story  
I've had in replays in the frames of my mind.

like when she goes all *Bella* on me  
& says she doesn't want to lose me  
like I'm her *Edward* in this *Twilight Saga*  
that we've managed to forge from something  
we cannot fully describe.

she secretly tells the wind  
how badly she wants to say she loves me  
& how much she wishes I write her a poem.

truth is,  
I'm a cold one

with nothing but pain keeping me warm.  
only I wish she would know that  
every time I hear her speak to me of love  
my heart revs a little.

maybe I'll tell her  
that she's my addiction.

## **Us & a broken replica of what could have been**

perhaps, your heart  
is as stony as mine now.

perhaps, my heart  
needs a form of release  
from this endless torture  
of aches & endless pills of rejections.

perhaps, we weren't really  
made to sip  
from the same cup of happiness  
for some form of  
emotional healing.

perhaps, assumptions  
are what's gotten us  
to where we are today;  
a broken reflection of regrets  
counting our losses  
in what could have been.

perhaps, we never  
knew what love really meant.

# *Of a certain gospel*



## **A gospel according to Mi**

let us read.

a certain man  
came upon a fair maiden. her name woven  
delicately into the softness of her voice;  
he abode within the clefts of her bosom  
twelve nights each for the sins  
he was about to commit  
& confess upon her bed.

he spoke to her  
in lyrical moans of pleasure  
& she responded in twists & turns & swirls & twists &  
turns & twirls  
as he read from a book  
between her legs moisturized  
by the fountains of kisses  
that leaped like hallelujahs  
from his lips.

together they spoke a language foreign to man  
a tongue never understood by angels nor demons.

let us pray.

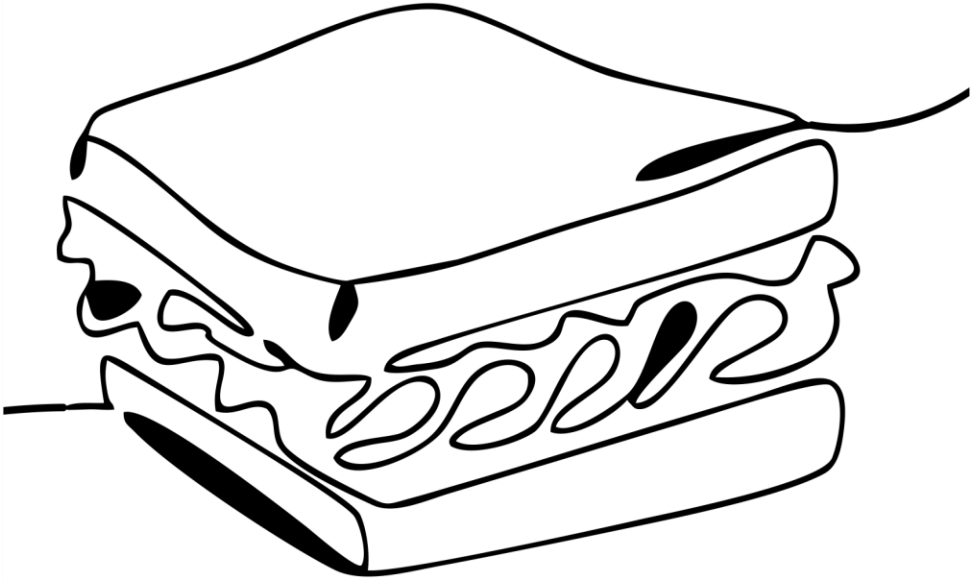


Miracle Quist is a poet, pencil artist & brand designer residing in the city of Ibadan. He is a lover of art, music & nature from which he draws inspiration. He is a firm believer in loving broken things as they remind him of how beautiful imperfection can be sometimes. His work often revolves around love, pain and broken things but not

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He was a second runner up in the *Itanile* poetry competition in 2020 with his piece “of strange men that bear my father’s face.”

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# sand wich

life. love. everything in between.



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