

KNOTS AND SECTIONS

Anthony Ameh Alechenu

Before you can twist a Bantu knot,
you have to part the hair.

Clean, straight lines,
or rough, hurried ones,
depending on how much strength is left in your arms.
Some parts ache to reach,
but you grab what you can
and twist it into something that looks okay,
something that can face the world.

I've seen Bantu knots on friends
who walked like survival was style,
their heads sectioned in patience,
their twists neat and defiant.
It wasn't just beauty;
it was protest,
a quiet declaration that even in heat and hardship,
something can still hold.

Maybe that's what being young here feels like:
every day, we section our lives,
dreams here,
bills there,
hope squeezed between rent and transport fare.
We twist ambition into late nights,
hunger into humour,
fear into faith we barely understand.

Family, economy, politics,
they reach into our hair without asking,
tightening dreams we didn't plan for,
pulling until the scalp burns.
We say we're fine.
We smile for the pictures.
But the mirror knows better.

And yet, here's the thing about Bantu knots:
when you take them out,
if you've survived the tension,
you get curls, beautiful ones,
formed not in ease, but in endurance.

Maybe that's what we are
A generation of tight twists,
waiting to unravel into something free.