



# **BEHIND CLOSED DOORS**

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*Behind Closed Doors: A gay novel/ Kingsley Adrian Banks*

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*To Onyx and Walter, for making me hit Publish. I would never have dared without your prodding.*

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## PROLOGUE

There are times when, upon the occurrence of a certain event, Time itself will seem to stand still; it would seem to be suspended above the specter of space. That is the feeling I have in the pit of my stomach at that moment when I watched the life leave the body of a man, when the life seemed to seep from him. It was a big moment and I thought in mind: Oh my God, Phoenix what have you done?

And there was the guy himself, standing still and erect, and he looked beautiful; in the flash of the light, the guy was a stunning beauty, and the Angel of death itself. In the stillness of the night Phoenix seemed to be the very embodiment of the things that was scary about the night. He was a murderer, one without a soul, and he had killed someone who loved him dearly. It was a man who had loved him enough to think to die for him. But the society would not have understood that kind of love, that love which existed between two men, one that may be pure and yet misunderstood in every way.

Phoenix, you are a murderer. I know what you did, and I think I will tell on you. But from the look on that stunning face which had been calculating enough to take the life of another person, there seemed to be nothing that the guy could not handle, no scandal he could not take and then turn to his own advantage and popularity, the love

of the screens, the siren that drew all in and left nothing of you when he was done with you.

It takes a special kind of person to think to take the life of another person, and Phoenix was that kind of special person. He had the guts and the special kind of mercilessness to do it, and there was that look in his face, that cold dead look of triumph in his face that showed that the guy knew what he was doing. And what if he was caught? What would happen?

‘He was trying to forcefully have sex with me, and that was the reason why I had to defend myself,’ he would probably say to the screens as the throng of the masses that loved him and yet hated him would weave a massive demonstration in his favor.

But I know what you did, Phoenix, and though you may hide behind the mask of your beauty and your good show of yourself to the world, I know you, I know what *you* did.

**PERIOD ONE: 1977-1999; forward and backwards**



## CHAPTER ONE

Henry closed his eyes to shut out the light, his nostrils drawing in a lungful of breath into his body as chaotic thoughts raced through his mind. He could hear the incessant annoying drone of the ceiling fan in the room as the blades churned out cool breeze in the hot air of the afternoon. That was precisely why he sometimes felt that he hated Nigeria; sometimes the afternoon weather in Lagos could be so atrociously hot, the sun beating down on the inhabitants of the country's most populated city with a feral ferocity that burned at the skin.

And his mother's refusal that he could attend the Business Executives Convention which was hosted in Cairo, Egypt, with her when she was planning to go compounded his problems. He'd always wanted to go and see the cradle of civilization with his own eyes; to see the very magnificent pyramids; watch the artificial irrigation methods that had been utilized by them in the ancient times, but Rosalie had been adamant. According to her, if he went, then he'd undoubtedly miss out on a lot of his lectures on campus because of the fact that the new semester was already around the corner. So he was left here in Lagos with his friends, all of whom were the spoiled sons and daughters of the elite social class like he was.

He made a snort of annoyance and buried his face into the feathery softness of his pillow. Oh, the hell with it.

‘Henry Johnson.’

He squeezed his eyes tighter, pretending to be asleep so that Richard, his best friend, would vanish into whatever thin air he’d materialized from and leave him alone to enjoy his dejection. He was in a foul mood, the implication being that he was not in the mood to see anybody and be forced to engage in idle chatter. And who was it that had dared to let the guy into the house without first consulting him in order to ascertain whether he was in the mood to entertain any visitors? He was wondering this as he drew his knees up to his chest, curling into a fetal position that he hoped would convince Richard’s hawk-like eyes that he was asleep so Richard could turn round and leave.

‘Henry Johnson,’ Richard called out in his unmistakable voice, and this time, it sounded closer.

Henry peeked at the guy surreptitiously from underneath his lashes and saw the slim-fitting jeans that were in the field of his vision, then he shut them again, and his mind willed the guy to go away. He wanted to stay right here in the comfort of his room and be left alone with his thoughts without the constant yapping of the voice of his friend disturbing the flow of his thoughts. Though his lids were squeezed shut, he could feel the shadow of Richard’s body leaning forward; he inhaled the scent of his cologne, and then he felt the shadow receding, heard the tread of boots moving across the red carpet and then out of the room.

With a heartfelt sigh of relief, he opened his eyes and swung his tired feet off the bed to the floor. Moving swiftly but silently, he went to the window, parted the

thick brown curtains that shut out the penetrating rays of the sun, and then he peered out into the garden, his eyes fixed on Richard Oke as the latter walked to his compact car.

Henry sighed and shut his eyes, his fingers balling into fists as a wave of emotional pain swept through him with the piercing precision of a surgeon's scalpel. As was customary with his body whenever he encountered Richard, hot desire and revulsion simultaneously rippled through his frame and he shuddered. He could never fathom why he found the guy so darn attractive, and what made his dilemma worse was the fact that Richard was his closest friend; they did everything together. And every moment he spent with Richard, every moment that Richard stood so close to him, their bodies touching, sent hot flashes of lust assailing his senses but he was always unable to do anything about it and this was torture to him. It drove him crazy. It was a prospect that thrilled and repelled him — being sexually attracted to his fellow guys was something he'd never envisaged at the onset of his puberty years, and being attracted to Richard specifically filled him with annoyance and emotional pain.

‘Henry? I thought you were asleep.’

Henry spun round to the sound of the tentative female voice. It was Mrs. Oyono, the woman who had worked for the Johnson family as a cook and housekeeper for as long as he could possibly remember. She lived in the servants' quarters with her family, and her jovial nature, plus the motherly influence she'd asserted over Henry, endeared her to his heart. However, what she didn't know was that he'd had sex with Linda, her eldest daughter. He'd done that because the chit had

come on strongly to him, and he'd also needed desperately to reassure himself that he wasn't queer; that he couldn't possibly be gay. Such a thought was inconceivable; not in his father's house, and certainly not in the Nigeria of his time which viewed her gay citizens as demon-possessed souls who had to be either committed in a psychiatric ward or delivered into the hands of pastors for exorcism.

'Richard dropped a note for you on your dresser,' the woman continued quietly. 'You should call him later today.'

As the woman turned to leave, Henry almost called out to her to have some lunch sent up to him in the room, but the truth of the matter was that he couldn't bear to choke down whatever morsel of food that would be served to him into his mouth. He was loaded with dread due to the fact that he was the only son of his father and the sole heir to the sprawling Johnson family estate which was an import/export conglomerate that had ruthlessly swallowed up its less prosperous rivals. They had over a thousand employees nationwide, and they conducted their business with countries across the globe. The Brian-Johnson Ltd earned the bulk of its money by doing business with countries where the labor was ridiculously cheap so as to maximize profits and expand its horizons. They were a very rich and very powerful family with connections in all the right places.

'We want you to know the real value of what we have in this family,' his father had said succinctly. 'A man must appreciate what he has in order to be able to use it properly. So, you're going to study Business Administration.'

That had been in 1997, when Henry was twenty, and he'd gone to the University of Lagos. Now, two years later, he could feel everything moving on more swiftly; he was now becoming more actively involved in the business of his family; he attended a myriad of business conventions and worked in the family offices during the semester breaks. . . It was a fast-paced, heady life, one that was filled with fun and excitement, pleasure and responsibility. But he was dreadfully scared because he knew that very soon; he would have to start a family of his own so as to ensure the continuity of the Johnson family name. Their legacy must live on.

But, deep in his mind, he felt that he could not be what everyone expected him to be. He had no sexual feelings for women; his liaison with Linda had thought him that lesson. It had made him aware of where his sexual fantasies really lay.

THE ROOM WAS very vast and filled up with young men and women who were all dressed to kill. The men were all smoking and chattering and drinking and the women were sipping their drinks from tall glasses and flutes with the sophistication that could only be achieved by wealth.

It was the third day of April, the first Saturday of the month, and the rich youth of Lagos society all wanted to celebrate it grandly. There were female belle dancers standing on raised platforms, all of them scantily dressed in shimmering bras and short skirts and they were all twisting and shimmying seductively to the tunes of the Eastern music that wafted forth from concealed speakers. They were all magnificent creatures,

their lithe bodies swaying and turning to the beat, all to the lascivious stares of the entranced audience.

The tunes of the music changed dramatically. The lights were turned down to a dim intimate red color, and there was an air of anticipation hanging over the room. The dancing young women moved together in one body towards the main dais which was now lit up with bright lights that hurt the eyes. They formed themselves into a circle around someone who had materialized from behind the curtains, and as they danced, they spread out their arms wide which were covered with shawls. The light reflected on the materials, captivating the audience further; a hush had descended over the room.

‘What is going on?’ Henry Johnson demanded in a low voice to his companion, Richard.

‘The main act of the night is about to begin now,’ Richard replied, chuckling. He pointed one long finger to the girls who were slowly executing their sexy dance. ‘They are hooking our attention so we can be prepared for what’s coming next. Watch now, Henry; they’re almost done.’

And then the throng of dancing women parted, revealing a figure that stood there with the deathly stillness of a marble statue. Simultaneously, the entire assemblage in the room gasped, Henry included. The person whom the attention was reverted upon was a young guy. He was slender, and was wearing nothing other than g-string parties and a strip of shimmering red material that barely covered his buttocks. He had light brown skin that glowed with good health, round feminine hips that was

greatly accentuated by his near nudity, and deliciously long legs that belonged on the catwalks.

But it was his face that held the most attraction. It was a stunning face, with the chiseled features framed by a shoulder-length black wig, a small straight nose that looked as if it had been chiseled by the hands of Michelangelo himself, exquisitely shaped pouty lips, and high cheekbones. He was the most beautiful guy Henry had ever seen.

‘Wow!’ Henry exclaimed, part in fascination and partly in scandalized horror. A huge python was draped around the shoulders of the guy, and it was hissing and slithering through his chest and stomach as if it owned him. Henry couldn’t stifle a shudder.

Richard had seen his reaction, and he laughed heartily, enjoying himself. ‘That’s shocking,’ he said. ‘The guy is marvelous. He’s a belle dancer that really knows what he’s doing with his craft. He’s more spectacular than the women dancers, and so everybody comes here to watch him dance and do his thing. I hear that he also doubles as a whore, selling himself to the highest bidder — to the highest man or woman that is ready to pay for him.’

The young dancers had flanked the young guy, and the lights had dimmed once again to a dull intimate glow. The guy danced in a synchronized move with the women, and with each twist of the sensual hips, the snake moved on him. The guy and his giant plaything moved together with perfect symmetry, one move flowing seamlessly into the next, and on the guy’s face was a look of total rapture, as if he was

engaged in a sex act, orgasms ripping through him. Every single move executed by his incredibly lithe body captivated the entire audience who watched him with a mixture of fascination and scandalized horror.

As they watched, the guy gently unwound the snake from his shoulders, and the animal turned its head back to his neck. He emitted a low laugh before prying the animal loose from his neck and handing it over to a dark man who had appeared behind him. The sensual beat of the music changed, and became a little faster, and the dancer smiled, revealing a set of white teeth. His eyes scanned the beer-drinking crowd slowly, before swiveling to Henry with a mesmerizing intensity that almost made him squirm. He found himself looking into luminous brown eyes that were as expressionless as a china mask, and as hard.

The dancer moved forward, all eyes fixed on him, and then he stopped before Henry's table. His dancing began again, and the club lights played on him, lighting him up in different shades of color as he effortlessly did his belly rolls, backbends, a walking shimmy; he whirled like a dervish. His choreography was superb; his emotional expression was one of languid sensuality and confidence in his abilities, and Henry was so entranced, he could not take his eyes off the guy. He could swear that the guy was dancing specifically for him, turning him on, sending waves of heat through his body as he stared at the provocative hips which were encircled with the tattoo of a snake.

The sensual moves, the beautiful body, were all playing tricks on his body and his senses, and he could feel the stirrings of an erection in his pants. It was a feeling



that astounded him and filled him with anticipation of what would happen if he were to meet the dancer, for he knew that what he was seeing was a hustler who was on sale and no doubt hawking his wares.

Abruptly, the music came to a halt, with the dancer turning in a backbend with perfect form. Screams filled the room as all clamored for more.

‘You’re wonderful,’ Henry said breathlessly, and the beautiful dancer smiled at him. That smile nearly made him lose his senses, and he quickly withdrew three bills from his loaded wallet and stretched them out to the guy. ‘Here, take this for your performance.’

The dancer smiled gratefully in thanks, and as he took the money their fingers brushed and their eyes met. It was only for a brief moment but within that moment, something deep inside Henry snapped. It could be called attraction, it could be called lust, but right at that moment, he knew that this was what he wanted, this was how his body worked; he wanted to go to bed with this dancer. He couldn’t keep his eyes off the guy as the guy made his way across the room, collecting tips from adoring male and female fans as they stuffed money into his palms and rubbed their hands all over his body as if they had the right to do so.

There were other delights for the night, but Henry was not interested in them. His thoughts were centered on the dancer. He could remember the moves, and that stunning face, plus the snake . . . he could think of nothing else, and when, fifteen minutes later, a girl with long lacquered nails tapped him on the shoulder and gave him a note which read: ‘Meet me in Room 106’, he was filled with elation.

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