



BOOK 5

# KING OF ENVY



#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

# ANA HUANG

# King of Envy

## KINGS OF SIN BOOK FIVE

ANA HUANG

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**KING OF ENVY:**

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*To all the readers who like their fictional men a little unhinged.*

*This one's for you.*

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# Author's Note

The Serbian spelling and pronunciation of Vuk's last name is Marković.

However, since he never says his last name himself, it is spelled Markovic (without the diacritic over the C) throughout the book as English speakers tend to use the English pronunciation, which differs from the original.



### **OFFICIAL SONG**

**“Envy (King of Envy)”**—Chris Grey

### **REST OF THE PLAYLIST**

**“Moth To A Flame”**—Swedish House Mafia ft. The Weeknd

**“Battle Scars”**—Lupe Fiasco ft. Guy Sebastian

**“Fashion”**—Sandra Resendes

**“You Right”**—Doja Cat ft. The Weeknd

**“Young and Beautiful”**—Lana Del Rey

**“Tearin’ Up My Heart”**—\*NSYNC

**“Baby (Acoustic)”**—Clean Bandit ft. Marina and Luis Phonos

**“Obsessed”**—Zandros ft. Limi

**“Who Do You Want”**—Ex Habit

**“I’m Yours”**—Isabel LaRosa

**“Lose Control”**—Teddy Swims

**“Believer”**—Imagine Dragons

**“Undiscovered”**—Laura Welsh

**“I Got You”**—Bebe Rexha

**“Way Down We Go”**—Kaleo

**“Let the World Burn”**—Chris Grey

*He had everything he could've wanted...except her.*

Dangerous. Powerful. Reclusive.

Vuk Markovic is notorious for shunning human interactions. The scarred billionaire rarely talks, and he has no interest in relationships outside his small but trusted circle.

His only exception? *Her*. The beauty to his beast, the object of his obsession.

He saw her first. He wanted her first. But now, she's engaged to his oldest friend—and the closer the wedding looms, the more he's torn between loyalty and desire.

She should be his...and he might just risk it all to have her.



Beautiful. Successful. Glamorous.

To the world, supermodel Ayana Kidane leads the perfect life. Her career has skyrocketed, and she's engaged to one of New York's most eligible bachelors.

What people *don't* know is that the engagement is only a business arrangement. He gets his inheritance when they marry; she gets the money she needs to leave her abusive agency.

Pretending to be in love should be easy—until she finds herself increasingly drawn to her fiancé’s enigmatic best man.

Vuk thrills and terrifies her in equal measure. She knows she should stay away, but when her wedding is thrown into chaos, he’s the only person she finds comfort in...

Until his past catches up with them and threatens everything they love.

# Content Notes

This story contains explicit sexual content, graphic violence, sexual harassment and assault, profanity, and topics that may be sensitive to some readers.

For a detailed list, [click here](#) or scan the code below.



## CHAPTER 1

# Ayana



“C ongratulations. Half the people here want to kill you, and the other half want to be you.” My fiancé’s lips brushed my cheek. “Now *that’s* an accomplishment.”

“I’m not sure that’s something to be proud of,” I said out of the corner of my mouth. I kept my smile planted firmly in place. People were watching. “Especially the second part.”

“When the guest list reads like a who’s who of fashion, it is,” he said. “Inspiring envy amongst this crowd is a talent. Embrace it, MOTY.”

I huffed out a laugh. “I swear you’re prouder of that title than I am.”

MOTY was short for Model of the Year. Eight months had passed since I received the prestigious title, and Jordan still brought it up any chance he got.

“What can I say? It proves I have a good eye.” He winked. “I remember when Hank told everyone he’d found the ‘face of the century’ at a random college party in D.C. Now look at you.”

My smile wavered at the mention of my agent before I caught myself. “I don’t know about face of the century, but this definitely beats a sweaty frat house.”

I took a sip of champagne and glanced around the outdoor garden. We were currently playing host and hostess at an end-of-summer cocktail party

for Jacob Ford, the iconic luxury department store Jordan's grandfather founded more than fifty years ago.

Jordan gave me my big break as a model when he chose me to be the store's ambassador four years ago. The size and success of that one campaign had unlocked more doors than two years of casting calls and small bookings had. I owed my career to him and Jacob Ford.

He'd rented out a beautiful rooftop garden for today's party. The drinks were flowing, the sun was shining, and half the guests were staring at us, discreetly or not-so-discreetly whispering behind their hands. Jordan was right. Some of them definitely wanted to kill me.

Modeling was a cutthroat industry. My rise to fame over the past few years, coupled with my engagement to one of New York's most eligible bachelors, hadn't endeared me to many of my peers. Friends were few, and *genuine* friends were even fewer.

It was what it was, but sometimes, I mourned the life I would've lived were I not quite so visible.

"Uh-oh." Jordan straightened. "Missile incoming. Gird your loins, or she'll blast you to bits."

My brief bout of melancholy popped like one of the bubbles in my drink. I stifled another laugh even as I heeded Jordan's advice and braced for impact.

The indomitable Orla Ford was no laughing matter. While Jordan was the CEO of Jacob Ford, his grandmother was the majority shareholder and family matriarch. She ruled the Ford clan from her estate in Rhode Island, and her ability to bend half of Manhattan to her will from two hundred miles away was a testament to her force of character.

"You are the hosts of this party, yes?" she said as she drew close. The elegant eighty-four-year-old cut a sharp figure in her floral suit and signature diamond-and-emerald necklace, but up close, she looked



exhausted. Her cheeks were sunken, and there was a slight shake in her hands.

Nevertheless, she stood tall and proud, her eyes narrowing as she awaited our response.

“Yes, Grandmother,” Jordan said, all traces of levity gone.

“Then why are you giggling here in the corner like schoolchildren instead of *hosting*?” Orla clucked her tongue. “Dante and Vivian Russo are here. Stella Alonso is here. Go network. You’re engaged now—you’ll have plenty of time for couple activities later.”

My face heated at the knowing tone she used to describe “couple activities.” Jordan placed his drink on a nearby table and sped off. I moved to follow him, but his grandmother stopped me with a hand on my arm.

“Not you, dear. Not yet.” She swept a discerning eye over me. “You look lovely.”

“Thank you,” I said, pleased. Compliments from Orla were rare, and I didn’t take her approval lightly.

I wore a gauzy saffron yellow minidress from the store’s in-house collection. My silk pressed hair cascaded past my shoulders in loose waves, and my gravity-defying heels put me two inches above Jordan’s even six feet. They’d cost an absurd amount of money, but they were so beautiful I couldn’t resist.

Everyone had their indulgences; mine were shoes and perfume. Also knitting, but my projects came out so misshapen I’d yet to admit *that* particular hobby to anyone.

“I wanted to speak to you because we don’t see each other in person often,” Orla said. “I know you and Jordan have been engaged for quite a while now—sixteen months, I believe—but I...” She faltered. Her breath wheezed.

I almost reached for her to make sure she was okay, but she shook it off a moment later like nothing had happened.

“I haven’t gotten a chance to properly welcome you to the family.” She clasped my hand in hers. “For the longest time, I thought Jordan would never find the right partner. He’s my only grandchild, and I was... concerned. He’s certainly never dated anyone for longer than a few weeks. I worried that when he finally *did* bring someone home, it’d be some trollop off the streets. I’m very glad it’s you instead.” Orla patted my hand. “You’re a beautiful couple. I know you’ll take good care of him.” She sounded sincere but a touch sad.

I purposely overlooked her use of the word “trollop”—the woman was in her late eighties, after all—and masked my confusion with another smile.

Orla wasn’t a sentimental person, and she’d already welcomed me to the family at my engagement party over a year ago. Perhaps she’d forgotten?

“I appreciate that, Orla. You’ve been so kind to me since we announced our engagement. I’m, um, really excited to join the family.”

If she noticed my small verbal stumble, she didn’t mention it. “Of course, dear. I had to tell you in person. I couldn’t count on my daughter to do it. The only thing she knows how to do is spend my money and take on increasingly appalling lovers.” She glanced to the side. “Ah, there’s Buffy Darlington. Excuse me, but I must go say hi.”

Orla gave my hand one last pat before she left.

I blinked at the empty spot she’d vacated. What the hell just happened?

“You look shell-shocked. What did she say? Did she berate you for wearing heels that make you taller than me?” Jordan reappeared like a ghost materializing out of thin air now that his grandmother was gone. He loved her, but he was also terrified of her. “You know how picky she is about appearances. It doesn’t look good when the woman is taller than the man. Blah, blah, blah.”

“Well, I’m five-ten in flats, so that’s going to be hard,” I quipped. “But no, she didn’t mention my heels.” I gave him a quick summary of our

conversation. “Also, I don’t want to alarm you, but is she okay? She looks a little pale, and her hands keep shaking.”

Jordan frowned. “I’m sure she’s fine. She got the flu last week, and she’s still recovering. Of course, she insisted on flying here for the party anyway. She loves any chance to brag about the company and our wedding.” He gulped down the fresh glass of scotch in his hand. “Speaking of which, don’t forget we have dinner with Vuk on Friday to go over some wedding stuff. I booked us a table at that new French bistro in the West Village.”

The champagne soured in my stomach.

Vuk Markovic was Jordan’s old college roommate and best man. I didn’t know him well, but our previous interactions hadn’t been the warmest. In fact, I was pretty sure he despised me.

I had no idea why. I was always friendly and cordial toward him, and I’d never paid attention to the rumors that the powerful CEO was possibly involved in shadier businesses than running the world’s largest liquor and spirits company.

Jordan was one of the best guys I knew. We’d clicked while I was working on the Jacob Ford campaign, and we’d been friends since. He wouldn’t ask someone to be his best man if they weren’t on the up and up. Right?

“Friday in the Village. Got it,” I said. “I’m kind of surprised he’s not here today.”

“Are you?” Jordan sounded skeptical. “Vuk hates parties. I’m pretty sure he thinks the seventh circle of hell is a black-tie gala with live music.”

I laughed. “I don’t know. He’s attended a lot more parties this year. *Mode de Vie* even mentioned it in their profile of him last month.”

“True, but I wouldn’t count on that trend continuing. Vuk does what he needs to do for business and that’s it. A garden cocktail party doesn’t fall under that umbrella.” Jordan cursed. “Shit. My grandmother’s staring

daggers at me again. I'm going to find some 'important' person to talk to before she stabs me with an ice pick. I suppose we can't be seen next to each other for the rest of the party, or she'll accuse us of not hosting properly."

"Same." We shook hands solemnly, our mouths twitching in an attempt to hold in our laughter. "Good luck, soldier," I said. "See you on the other side."

Jordan responded with a laconic two-finger salute. He disappeared into the crowd, and I took a final sip of my drink before I moved toward Stella Alonso and her husband.

I passed by Orla on the way. Her words echoed in my head.

*You're a beautiful couple. I know you'll take good care of him.*

I really did appreciate the sentiment. A lot of people thought she was scary—which she could be—but privately, she was warmer than others gave her credit for.

I returned her smile with another one of my own and ignored the quick twist of guilt in my gut.

Getting Orla's approval was a big accomplishment, but I suspected she'd be less benevolent if she found out the truth: that my engagement to her grandson was a complete and utter sham.