

## **The Isabelle Anthology**

*Meet Isabelle, a quiet and meek woman and experience her story of figuring out her identity and her dreams of the future.*

### **The Obligatory Sad Side Character Story: Isabelle Edition**

"Get your ass up here and dance!" Kira held her hand out for me, but all I could do was stare at it. The sounds, the lights, *me...*

"I... this is a bad idea. What if people are looking?"

"Izzy, if people are looking at you there's only two outcomes. You either like it and we hook you up with them, or you hate it and I bust their balls open. Now get up!"

She yanked my wrist and hauled me over to the floor.

Have I mentioned I've never been to a party before? Not like this, at least.

It's my own fault. Kira used to offer for me to come with her and Liv but I was always too scared... I think she only forced me into this because she doesn't want to do it alone after we fell out with Liv. But why should she be scared? She's a natural, she's pretty and thin and confident, she's starting her own designer clothes line, she can stand up to anyone in a fight, and she's been all over the world. When she told me to wear these clothes that she promised looked good on me all I could think about was how much I show, how much others see. Obviously she looked great, the perfect mix of cute and cool, sneakers and tall socks and a jacket that slopes off her shoulder. I couldn't wear that. I couldn't wear this.

As I try to dance, it reminds me of that time a whale washed up on the beach, and the less said the better.

I settle for moving my arms in small sways, side to side, but even that might be too much.

Dancing takes it out of you though. Two minutes in and I'm exhausted, but Kira pops up behind me and taps my shoulder and tells me to look down past a set of people and into the corner. There's a guy there with his eyes dead set on me...

"He's been watching you since you got up and started dancing." Kira said, a little smirk in the corner of her lips. And obviously I start stuttering like an idiot. "I... no, he's just..." I turn and see a guy who looks a lot better than me and say "It's him he's looking at, not me..."

Kira grabs my arm and makes me wave at him, and he waves back, and...

"He won't like me..."

"Oh, he DOES. Sorry to break it to you, Izzy."

I should have never come here. The expectation, the dreams, they all start piling up and I- I never wanted this, I just wanted to spend time with my friends and I never should have thought that I could handle being around people. I know what will happen, I know if I let myself start believing again I'll just be let down and it will hurt and now I'm spiralling and...

"Oi." Kira snaps me out of it. "You don't have to go after him, right? I mean, EUGH! Men. But like, you should know that people are gonna want you back. You're not chopped liver."

"Even a butcher sells chopped liver. I'm just yesterday's jam."

I break out of her hand and walk away. Parties aren't for me. Finding love on Winterveil is a lie. I stopped before I even began, because what's the point in even trying?

Kira will check up on me tomorrow, I'm sure.  
Let me feel depressed for a while alright?

Parties aren't made for me, but there's one thing I'm good at.

I get home and walk into my room. Turn on the fireplace. Boil some water. Steep my gold leaf yerba. The smell is warm and luxurious. It's snowing outside the window where I keep my green and red tree with a little star on top. And I open my favourite book right now. It's about a lawyer, who's tall and pretty and is filthy rich, and she never takes no for an answer and always wins her cases no matter what. She's strong and bold and hilarious too.

Every time I flip the page and find a new chapter, I hope I'll be on one of those pages, hoping the next person she'll save is me.

### **Isabelle Isn't My Friend**

Kira chose the worst person to have a falling out with.  
Liv took herself out. Fired by Adrienne in the most public and transparent way possible, she had made herself quickly scarce and the times Kira saw her were now only when out in town. Merrick was, of course, always glued at her side.

But Kira couldn't say the same for Izzy.  
There was no grand exit. No explosive blow-up, no argument to end them all, no climactic storm out of work never to return.  
Izzy had done so in private, as was her way.  
Kira had no doubts that this was her fault, even putting aside her own personal feelings.

The next day she went to work, she saw her at the front desk.  
With the door to the workroom right behind Kira had no choice but to walk past her.  
But she did choose to talk to her.

Izzy made a point to greet her with her back turned, choosing instead to meander her work with the filing cabinets.

"Good morning Izzy! ... it's Friday. Did you get rained on this morning?"  
Perhaps starting things like nothing had happened at all was the wrong choice, but Kira began to believe more and more that she did not know what the right one was.

"Nope." Izzy replied. That's all she gave.  
Right then. Kira took the road straight to Apology City, population of 1.  
Was doing it at work right in front of where clients could come in the wrong choice too?  
"Izzy I'm sorry. I didn't want you to nearly lose your new job, I didn't..."  
"Can we not talk about that here? It's private." Snapped Izzy.  
"Right, but..."  
"I warned you and told you not to talk to Lyra but you did it anyway. You made this mess.  
Live with it."  
Kira began to tear up. Was there really no way of mending this?

"Izzy I'm sorry... I didn't want to lose you as a friend and now I have just for trying to make sure you were okay? It's like we weren't friends at all?"

"We weren't. You just wanted it to be."

Lyra had bolstered Izzy's confidence. Told her she had to stand up for what she wanted. To not let the people around her dictate what she needed.

Isabelle had decided the path ahead.

She would be strong, and bold, and ruthless, like the Lawyer she loved.

Kira was just an obstacle she never really liked to begin.

## **Strong Independent Woman**

Lyra was the goal, the endgame.  
She was tall,  
Strong,  
Self-sustaining,  
Smart,  
Cool,  
Calm,  
And the best of all,  
She didn't need *anyone*.

Izzy would do anything to be like her.  
She'd give everything to be her.  
Just as it happened, she was given a chance,  
A dream come true,  
She could be just like Lyra and make herself just like Lyra,  
And she would never let that go.

She had read all her cases six times over,  
Front to back, from her early days to the current,  
From pro bono in Westfall to the King's High Court,  
Changing the lives of one person to deciding the fate of a nation.

Izzy followed all the steps, even the little ones too.  
She woke up and stretched six times and steamed her face, a comment from an interview in 34adp said to, then prepared her yerba with care.  
The ritual meant more to her than just a good cup of tea. She had to do it exactly as Lyra said.  
The powder was too lumpy, a measure of water too much. Toss it out. Start again.  
Wait, would Lyra be wasteful? She reached back into the bin, recovered what she could.  
Lyra would never eat from a bin, no!  
She twisted her mind,  
Changed her hair,  
Changed her makeup,  
Changed her glasses,  
Her suit,  
Her shoes,  
Her manner of speaking,  
Ate only what she ate,  
Thought only what she would think,  
She lived and breathed and dreamt Lyra,  
And everything and every part of her and every single dredge of who she was and what she is became Lyra.

Izzy wandered home, and set a single candle alight in her room.  
Lyra wouldn't use more than that just for reading.  
She picked up a copy of the monthly digest,

And quietly spent the evening.

No more friends.

No more parties.

No more wide smiles,

Izzy twisted her lips into the image of Lyra's she had burned into her mind.

Petite

Perfect

Professional

She sat there for hours,

Ate a clump of leaves

And then slept

Because that was what being Lyra meant

That was what she was willing to do to be who she wanted to be

There was no room for friends

There was no room for loneliness

There was no room for Izzy.