



The Spellmans Strike Again: Document #4

By Lisa Lutz

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In Document #4 of the Edgar-nominated series detailing an outrageously funny family of detectives, former wild child and private investigator Izzy Spellman finally agrees to take over the family business. But the transition won't be a smooth one...

First among her priorities as head of Spellman Investigations is to dig up some dirt on the competition, slippery ex-cop Rick Harkey—a task she may enjoy a little too much. Next, faced with a baffling missing-persons case at the home of an aging millionaire, Izzy hires an actor friend, Len, to infiltrate the mansion as an undercover butler—a role *he* may enjoy a little much.

Meanwhile, Izzy is being blackmailed by her mother (photographic evidence of Prom Night 1994) to commit to regular blind dates with promising professionals—an arrangement that doesn't thrill Connor, an Irish bartender on the brink of becoming Ex-boyfriend #12.

At Spellman headquarters, it's business as unusual. Doorknobs and light fixtures are disappearing every day, Mom's been spotted crying in the pantry, and a series of increasingly demanding Spellman Rules (Rule #27: No Speaking Today) can't quite hold the family together. Izzy also has to decipher weekly "phone calls from the edge" from her octogenarian lawyer, Morty, as well as Detective Henry Stone's mysterious interest in rekindling their relationsh . . . well, whatever it was.

Just when it looks like things can't go more haywire, little sister Rae's internship researching pro bono legal cases leads the youngest Spellman to launch a grassroots campaign that could spring an innocent man from jail—or land Rae in it.

The Spellmans Strike Again is hands down the most hilarious, thrilling, and moving book in this bestselling, award-nominated series. And it proves beyond a reasonable doubt that Isabel Spellman, no matter how much she matures, will never be able to follow Rule #1: Act Normal.

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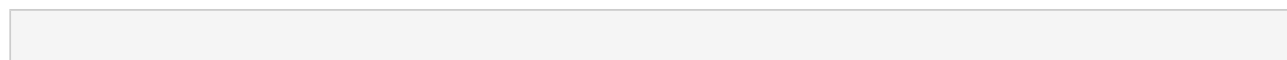
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A Conversation with Author Lisa Lutz



Q: What was the inspiration behind the Spellman family? Was the series originally supposed to be about Isabel or did you always plan on writing about a family of sleuths?

A: I first envisioned the Spellmans over seven years ago. And if memory serves me, which it rarely does, the entire cast of characters sort of came to me over a short period of time. The germ of the idea was always to write about a family of private investigators and how the nature of the business affected their family life. I knew that if the parents were spying on their children, they'd need a motivation. That's when Isabel's character took form. I figured a history of rebellion would keep the parental unit constantly on watch.

Q: Isabel has an interesting relationship with her family, to say the least. Do her experiences represent any of your experiences with your parents/siblings? Or are you guys relatively "normal"?

A: I wouldn't say that my family is normal. I'm not sure how many of those are left. But the Spellmans are pure fiction. They do not in any way represent my family or my familial experience.

Q: Which of your characters do you feel has matured the most over the course of the series? Do you think any of them have regressed?

A: Isabel has matured the most. She had the furthest to go. The rest of them go through phases of regression, depending on the book. But that has always seemed to me to be normal development. People don't move in straight lines.

Q: Have you ever had any prom night shenanigans like Isabel did? We won't tell anyone, we promise...

A: There was an incident the night before graduation that I was involved in. So was some toilet paper. I'm afraid I was nowhere near as delinquently creative as Isabel.

Q: In each book in the *Spellman* series, you've denounced the myth that stakeouts are fun or exciting. You make them seem like tedious, time-consuming work. Have you ever been on one yourself? Are they as bad as you make them seem?

A: I was on a few surveillance jobs as part of a big team. I would be the person to follow the subject on foot when the need arose. But most of the time, we were sitting in a car doing nothing. Generally surveillance is a solo activity. How exciting can sitting alone in a car for hours on end be?

Q: Where did you get the idea to put the footnotes at the bottom of the pages? Was it only meant to happen once or twice and you just started having too much fun?

A: That's pretty much how it happened. When I was describing *Get Smart*, it was too easy to add a funny detail about an episode or character. And it required very little effort. I also liked the idea of Isabel adding commentary to what was already essentially her commentary.

Q: You instruct readers that if they haven't seen *Blazing Saddles*, *High Anxiety* and *Young Frankenstein*, they are to immediately "run, not walk, to your local video store." Are you big fans of these movies? What is your favorite movie and why?

A: I am a huge Mel Brooks fan. And I do think that not seeing his canon of classics is a bit criminal or clueless. I could never really choose a favorite book, but whenever I'm asked what my favorite movie is I always say *Withnail & I*, a British film from 1987. It's funny and sad and absolutely gorgeous to look at. It's the film I can watch over and over again.

Q: Throughout the *Spellman* series, you've also mentioned a number of TV shows that Isabel is a fan of: *Get Smart*, *The Wire*, *Doctor Who*. Are you a big fan of these shows as well? Did you intend to incorporate so many pop culture references into your book or did it just turn out that way?

A: I love *The Wire*. I can't think of a television show that I think is superior to it in any way. I was obsessed with it from the moment it came on the air. I do also love *Doctor Who* and *Get Smart*. As I've said before, you can learn a lot from a person's choice of entertainment. That's part of the reason for pop-culture references in the books. But it's also because in real life we reference these things all the time. Far more than most books indicate. It just seems to be a fair reflection of reality.

Q: Why did you decide to reignite the romance between Henry and Isabel? Was there ever a different ending to the book where they parted ways? Did you always think they were meant to be together from the moment he was introduced in *The Spellman Files*?

A: When I first wrote *The Spellman Files*, I had no idea that Henry Stone would turn out so interesting. He was a small character in the first book. But I didn't want him to read as flat. So as I tried to flesh out his character, he took on a life of his own, and his various relationships with the Spellmans happened organically. I've written the relationship between Henry and Isabel as I've gone along. There was never a master plan. I just wrote what felt right.

Q: What's next for you? Are there more Spellman adventures to come?

A: I just completed my first non-Spellman book, which was very exciting, and now I'm ready to come back to them. So I suspect there will be a return of the Spellmans in the not-too-distant future.

From Publishers Weekly

In Edgar-finalist Lutz's entertaining fourth and final novel about the eccentric Spellman PI clan (after *Revenge of the Spellmans*), Isabel Izzy Spellman juggles the usual family drama—her mother tries to sabotage Izzy's relationship with her Irish bartender boyfriend and younger sister Rae throws herself into freeing a wrongly convicted man—while helping to drum up business in a dreary economy. While Rae works on her Free Schmidt campaign, Izzy investigates the whereabouts of a missing valet with a checkered past and sifts through garbage for a screenwriter client. Older brother David, the only Spellman not involved in the family business, grows closer to his defense attorney girlfriend. On the sly, Izzy is also tailing Rick Harkey, a rival San Francisco PI, and discovers that Harkey left behind a trail of suspicious arrests and conveniently misplaced evidence in his career as a cop. Narrator Izzy's biting wit—mixed with a refreshing dose of humility and sadness—easily carries the story. (Mar.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Quips continue to trip off the tongue of Isabel “Izzy” Spellman, the PI at the center of Lutz’s popular mystery series. In this fourth (and possibly final) installment, Izzy, who’s poised to take over Spellman Investigations from her parents, is faced with troubles on the domestic front and a challenging case, too. Her mother is blackmailing her into going on blind dates with lawyers (Ma Spellman, it seems, has serious dirt on Isabel from prom night 1994). Her relentlessly sassy sister, Rae, becomes passionate (OK, obsessed) with liberating the wrongly convicted. On the professional front, Izzy looks into the disappearance of an aging millionaire’s butler. (She has enlisted her actor friend, Len, to take over servant duties in the interim, a role he adopts with relish, right down to the fake British accent.) Then there’s Harkey, a shady PI and former beau Izzy is determined to expose, and love interest Henry Stone, a cop with a kind heart and an annoyingly healthy diet (stir-fried tofu, anyone?). Lutz (*Revenge of the Spellmans*, 2009) delivers another engaging blend of wisecracks and crime-solving. --Allison Block

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Guillermo Behler:

The book *The Spellmans Strike Again: Document #4* gives you the sense of being enjoy for your spare time. You can utilize to make your capable a lot more increase. Book can to become your best friend when you getting stress or having big problem together with your subject. If you can make examining a book *The Spellmans Strike Again: Document #4* being your habit, you can get much more advantages, like add your capable, increase your knowledge about several or all subjects. You may know everything if you like open up and read a reserve *The Spellmans Strike Again: Document #4*. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science publication or encyclopedia or other people. So , how do you think about this guide?

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