



## The Spellmans Strike Again

*Lisa Lutz*

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At the ripe old age of thirty-two, former wild child Isabel "Izzy" Spellman has finally agreed to take over the family business. And 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.

## The Spellmans Strike Again Details

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Author : Lisa Lutz

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## From Reader Review The Spellmans Strike Again for online ebook

### Chantale says

The date I 'finished' the book is the day I gave up on it and the series. I got to page 116. Revenge of the Spellmans was bad, Curse of the Spellmans was worse, this book is terrible. This series is declining.

The format for the second title in the series changed and it was awful, they changed it a little in the next titles but the first book was the best for format, plot, characterization. How sad, this series had such potential.

The reference to previous 'documents' (Spellman books) gets annoying. The relationships are underdeveloped. The relationship with Harry is so poor when he should be her love interest again by now. Isabel is immature and unbelievable. Why an undisclosed prom picture takes precedence over her relationship at the age of 30 is absurd. Her romance with the barkeeper is pointless (and doomed as is suggested by her constant reference to Ex #12).

Isabel's 'phone calls from the edge' with Morty add nothing to the plot. Why would her actor friend be stupid enough to play a butler all the time outside of work?! The mandatory family rules are humourless. A pointless book. Boring from the first page.

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### Dan Schwent says

As Izzy tries to dig up dirt on rival PI Rick Harkey, her mother obsessively sets her up on dates with lawyers. But why do Izzy's parents kick everyone out of the house on Wednesdays? And why are fixtures and doorknobs disappearing from the Spellman house? And what's with David and the mystery blonde, or Rae and her new boyfriend?

The family of dysfunctional detectives is back in their fourth, and what would seem final if I didn't know it wasn't the last book, outing. Some series hit the skids around the fourth book but I found the Spellmans to be as entertaining as ever.

While they've all aged a bit, the Spellman cast is as hilarious as ever. Izzy has been dragooned into dating lawyers despite still being with future ex-boyfriend #12, Connor. Rae has dedicated herself to freeing a wrongfully convicted man. The Spellman parents are having intercourse. And the other characters like David and Henry are also acting strangely.

For a humorous series mystery, this sure had its share of great moments. When spoiler and spoiler finally got together, I grinned like a mule eating an apple. When spoiler said he was dying of the cancer, I came close to shedding a silent man tear at lunch in front of a couple co-workers. While I'm glad it wasn't the final Spellman book, it felt like it was in a lot of ways by the end.

Honestly, that's about all I want to say to avoid spoilage. If you've come this far into the Spellman saga, you won't want to back out now. Four out of five stars.

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## Jlaurenmc says

Lisa Lutz first introduced Isabel Spellman and lunatic-ridden family in her 2007 debut novel *The Spellman Files*. The Spellmans run a family-owned private investigation agency in San Francisco, but they are far from your typical small family business owners. They are each other's worst nightmare. In fact, they spend almost as much time spying on one another as they spend conducting investigations for paying customers. Izzy, the narrator, is the thirty-something middle child who never grew up -- or, at least it took several extra years. In the previous three books, she gets into all kinds of trouble. In this fourth (and I've heard last) installment, Izzy is a bit more level-headed, but the rest of the family continues with their crazy antics.

I really don't want to give away the storyline of the previous three installments in the series, so instead of focusing solely on *The Spellmans Strike Again*, I'll introduce you to the cast of characters:

- \* Albert Spellman: The patriarch of the family, he's an ex-cop who bought the business from an old-school private investigator. So far, he's made a decent living for his family. Although sometimes slightly sneaky, he's actually the quiet one.
- \* Olivia Spellman: Mother and number one family spy. And by family spy, I mean the one who spies on family members the most. But, after all, she's the mother -- it's her job to make sure her eldest isn't cheating on his wife and to ruin Izzy's going-nowhere relationships. If she didn't have her children's lives to meddle in, what fun would life be?
- \* David Spellman: The oldest and only male Spellman child, he's also the only semi-normal member of the family. Although in the last book, he made that a subject of much speculation (and spying, of course). Once a stable, employed and productive member of society, he's recently become both unemployed and divorced...
- \* Isabel Spellman: Protagonist, middle child, and perpetually rebellious adolescent (even after 30). However, recently (as aforementioned) she's become ever-so-much more mature. Except in relationships, as she's currently seeing the bartender at her local bar, primarily for convenience's sake. She would be there anyway; he would be there anyway... You get the picture. Might as well date, right?
- \* Rae Spellman: The youngest sibling (currently still in high school), she is the true wild-card of the bunch. A genius, but a misguided one. She's gone missing (*The Spellman Files* -- Book#1), stalked a policeman (*Curse of the Spellmans* -- Book#2), and forever seems to be torturing her family (all 4 novels). When she wants something, she goes after it with all guns blazing -- and she always wants something.

Intertwined with the Spellman family members is a recurring cast of characters who are hilarious in their own right. Izzy's best friend is the 80-plus retired lawyer Morty; Rae's policeman crush-turned-best-friend is the health-fanatic Henry Stone; and various others round out the novels perfectly.

Besides Lutz's obvious talent with humor, the best thing about these books is the refreshing style -- both in writing and in layout. There are no chapters, but rather transcripts, case files, and phone calls. (For example, headings such as "Phone Call from the Edge #17" and "Rule #40 -- Learn Some Manners".) Lutz also employs a frequent use of footnotes, which adds abundantly to the reading pleasure. An excerpt to prove my point:

Phone call from the edge #19

[Transcript reads as follows:]

MORTY: Izzele, tell me everything that's new.

ME: I have some information and I don't know what to do with it.

MORTY: I'm all ears.

ME: You are, aren't you?<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Morty's ears are positively enormous. (p. 111)

Lisa Lutz is a masterful writer whose series includes both likeable, although crazy, characters and exceptional writing. I love the Spellmans in all their madness, and I think you will, too. There is also talk of a movie version coming soon!

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### **Andrea says**

I absolutely loved this audiobook! It was humorous, witty, clever and very entertaining.

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### **Judy says**

I'm just going to say it right out--I'm in love with Lisa Lutz's books about the Spellman family. I enjoyed the first three and Isabel is right--you need to read them in order to enjoy the full flavor of the stories as they unfold. These books are like sitting around the dining table after a family meal and playing the "remember when" game. You can only appreciate each of the characters when you have seen their stories evolve in these hysterical novels. Lisa, in the name of all things holy, keep these books coming. Okay, just a tease--Rae commits a felony (and is caught), Isabel is taking over the family's private investigation business (where they spend a great deal of time investigating each other) and the transition is less than smooth, Henry wants to reestablish a "friendship" with Isabel. Unfortunately, she is dating a Irish bartender who keeps her supplied with free drinks. There are innocent people in prison and guilty people walking the streets. And so much more.

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### **Lisa Vegan says**

I don't often say this about series books, but this fourth book was the best and most hilarious book of the four, and that says a lot coming from me, as the first three books received 5 stars each from me as well.

This book, more than any other, makes me wish I had a humor shelf at Goodreads, but I don't want my (1) lifechanging book knocked off my profile page, so humorless I will remain.

Absolutely hilarious. I found myself laughing out loud so many times, sometimes uncontrollably laughing again a page or two or three after a particularly amusing part. Warped, black humor, often my favorite kind, but I loved this especially because it's also a story with heart, with people I can care about, however bizarrely they sometimes behave.

I love the Spellmans and every character in the book: especially Izzy, Rae, Olivia, Albert, Maggie, David,

Henry, Fred, Morty, and Len and Christopher. By the way, I'd have loved to have had the latter two's dossiers included in the appendix. It takes much inventiveness to have created these people; I will not say characters.

This was a perfect comfort read for me. Lisa Lutz has said there will be at least one more book but probably not until at least 2012. Waiting will not be fun. I highly recommend this series, which must be read in order: #1: The Spellman Files, #2: Curse of the Spellmans, #3: Revenge of the Spellmans, and then this one, #4: The Spellmans Strike Again, which amazingly enough was the best of all of them; the series keeps getting better and better.

As with the other three books, this is mostly a very funny book, even the chapter titles are amusing, but there are some sad parts and along with a bit of seriousness, this book includes a social conscience.

So, it all came together and it has the best end, although I'd have loved it even if the ending had been less satisfying because the whole reading experience was incredibly entertaining

Check out the author's web site and <http://lisalutz.com/> and a mild spoiler here: <http://www.innocenceproject.org/Content/Issues/2008/Summer/BookReview.aspx>, and there are other web pages about this, most with links from the author's site.

I would be ecstatic if I owned these four Spellman books, but I'm very grateful to my public library for the opportunity to read them. However, some day I may not be able to resist (maybe when the last book is published) and might buy them all. I'd like to read sections when I need a mood elevator and I'd love to support this author, who manages to be funny even in her author bio section in the inside back cover of the book(s).

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### **Kate Coombs says**

Have you ever shared a book you really loved with a friend because you thought they were the right personality/mind to appreciate it, and you were thinking, They'd better like it, because it's SO, SO GOOD!? Yeah, me too.

I opened my door a few minutes ago to just such a friend, to whom I had loaned all four of Lisa Lutz's Spellman books. My highly educated, articulate neighbor stood on the front porch sort of stammering. I will try to recreate approximately what she said: "I, I just LOVE the Spellmans. It's like-- I don't even want to give the books back. I just want to reread them. I mean, I cried when [spoiler deletion:], and I had to tell myself, 'This is fiction!' but it's just--" So then I rescued her, saying, "Trust me, I feel exactly the same way." After which we agreed that Lisa Lutz is what Janet Evanovich wants to be when she grows up. (Sorry, Janet. Your books are a lot of fun, though!)

These four books are mysteries about a woman named Izzy Spellman whose parents are private investigators--folks who have no qualms about turning their investigative skills on family members, say, to find out who their grown children are dating. The whole clan does that, actually. I can't even begin to describe this cheerfully dysfunctional bunch, especially Izzy's diabolical teenage sister, but I will mention that when Izzy does start dating someone, she will refer to him as, for example, "Future Ex-boyfriend #12." The funniness just escalates from there.

If you have a wry, dry sense of humor and want to spend time with some likably weird characters, please--read the Spellman books! (This one's Book 4 and sounds like it might be the last.)

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### **Jami says**

I heart The Spellman Files books and have been completely enamored since book one. I make no apologies for giving this fourth book in the series five enthusiastic stars because I pretty much think anything Lisa Lutz writes is pure genius. For some reason, her writing style really clicks with me.

This book, like its predecessors, was witty, hilarious, clever, and managed to have great relationships without getting sappy or sloppy. The mystery of the book is always a nice twist, but I always feel like the book is more about Izzy's relationships with her crazy family, interesting and diverse friends, and her future ex-boyfriends. Loved it . . . can't wait to see what Lutz does next!

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### **Paula Phillips says**

If you are like me and love light-hearted and fun mystery novels, then Lisa Lutz's series "The Spellman Files" are definitely books that should be found in your dark alleys of the reader's corner. According to other reviewers, if you like Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum series then this is something similar , for me I'm just starting on the Stephanie Plum books as I got Book #1 One for Money out of the library. The Spellman family consist of Olivia and Albert Spellman (Mum and Dad) , Children - David, Isabel aka Izzy and Rae. Together, the Spellman's own a PI Business and are definitely the family that if you needed justice done for a strange cause - you should contact The Spellmans. In this novel , we discover that David has a new girlfriend named Maggie whose a Laywer - but what is David up to as Izzy and Olivia spot David several times with an Amazon Looking Blonde , Is he cheating on Maggie ? , Rae -the youngest of the Spellmans is doing some intern work at Maggie's firm and when she realises that so many innocent people get sent to Jail , she starts a "Free Schmidt" campaign - tshirts, stickers and all. Something's up with Olivia and Albert and why is items of the household disappearing ? and it wouldn't be a Spellman book without having a strong focus on Izzy whose Mother is making her go on a blind date with a lawyer once a week even though she is dating Connor , though will her relationship be strong enough to last ? As Izzy is still tracking down Hartley , a crooked PI will her plans of attack backfire and why is it all the cases she seems to be receiving are related to Hartley ? What I loved most though about all of The Spellman Files books is the family dynamics and relationship between the entire Spellman Clan - especially their Family Rules Board :)

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### **Daniel Sevitt says**

The spell may finally be broken at the end of this 4th Spellman book. Still funny, still entertaining but getting a little self-referential and repetitive. Of course I'll go on to read the last two, because that's how I roll, but I'm not sure there's a way back from this.

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### **Alisha Marie says**

I'm going to start off by saying that I love books. I mean all types of books (maybe except for romance, but that's a whole other topic). Every once in a while you will read a book that will just be like nothing you ever read before. A book which you will herald as your favorite literary masterpiece. The types of books that when you tell your friends you read it, they will look at you in amazement and say "Wait, you didn't just read it, but you actually enjoyed it? You complete and utter freak!". The type of book in which you will hold onto until your dying day and when you are on your deathbed, your final words will be "Read this book, you philistine!" The Spellmans Strike Again, ladies and gentlemen....is not this book. But still it's pretty damn good.

The thing about the Spellmans is that the whole family is insane. I'm talking about the kind of insane that can be temporarily certifiable. They take getting into your family's business to a whole other level and make it into an olympic sport. I learned all this from the first installment The Spellman Files (which you totally have to read before you read this one. It's in the footnotes...) which introduced me to the wonderful and brilliant (and okay, kinda trainwreck-ish) Isabel (Izzy) Spellman (and yeah, I guess her family, too).

The Spellmans Strike Again is a mixture of a whole lot of things. It's part mystery, part romance, and mostly humor. But the reason which I've read this (and the previous installments) is because of the complete Spellman family. They're all wonderfully zany. They love each other, yes, but they also spy on each other, blackmail each other, and basically make each other's lives miserable with hilarious results.

You will absolutely love Izzy Spellman. She's a bit of a mess in the previous novels, but in this one, we see her make an active attempt to evolve and mature a little bit (but not too much, we wouldn't want her to be a completely better person would we? No. She makes us feel better about ourselves) while trying to sort out the details of her life, her investigation, and her mother's incessant meddling.

We see all of the other characters grow up and change a bit, too. Except for Rae, I don't think she'll ever change. As the Spellman saga finally ends, we get bittersweet closure. We welcome the characters new beginnings and cry over others end. Not only was I shedding tears for some storylines, but because this is the end of the Spellmans for us the readers. But it's okay, I've come to accept this (PLEASE NO!!!!) or at least come to terms with it a little better.

If you've read the previous Spellman novels, then there is no doubt that you will love this one. It's a satisfying end. If you've never read any of the Spellman novels, then I suggest you start at the beginning and work your way towards the end (unless you're like Izzy and like to start stories in the middle). Sure, The Spellmans Strike Again isn't a literary masterpiece and you won't be able to brag to your friends about this amazing new novel that they have to read which will make them seem like they were deserving of that Ivy League reputation (they're just going to have to deal with their shortcomings. It sucks, but hey, that's life), instead you'll be able to tell them about this amazing new book that will make them laugh, cry (in the words of Lorelai Gilmore "mostly because you're laughing so hard"), and just enjoy it completely.

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### **Brenda says**

I love the Spellmans. Why I can't get more people on board with this series, I don't know....Maybe it is because when I tell people about these books, our main character Izzy doesn't sound too good - immature,

interfering, drinks too much, has been arrested and jailed several times, spies on her nearest and dearest, thinks of her romantic interests as "current ex-boyfriends", and her best friend is an octogenarian.

Yet she is oddly endearing. First of all, her and her quirky family members are laugh out loud funny. So is her 80-something year old friend, Morty. They're zany like a screwball comedy. Plus I see something of myself in Izzy Spellman, especially her flaws.

This time around....well, does it matter what is going on with the Spellmans this time around? With these books, where you start often has nothing to do with where you end up. In *The Spellmans Strike Again*, precociously evil little sister Rae is about to graduate from high school, brother David is dating the ever so normal Maggie, Maggie is putting up with the Spellman family, the parental unit is up to something suspicious, and Izzy is slowly taking over the family's private investigation business while being blackmailed by her mother.

Just go with it and enjoy the ride.

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### **AdiTurbo says**

Fantastic, see my reviews of previous books in the series to learn why.

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### **Rhonda says**

In San Francisco, thirtyish Isabel Spellman knows the family rules rule having broken all of them at one time or another, but now she grooms herself to take over Spellman Investigations from her retiring parents Albert and Olivia. Her older brother David is downsized corporate America lawyer and her other sibling is simply Rae, no description necessary beyond she is seventeen.

Currently, in spite of the DNA, Isabel learns one rule of private sleuthing is tediousness. Accompanied by her friend Len Williams, she investigates the disappearance of Mason Graves (who she hopes does not live up to his surname), valet to wealthy Franklin Winslow and studying (alone) the garbage of Jeremy Pratt's former wife for proof she stole his screenplays. Izzy and her boyfriend bartender Conner O'Sullivan find time when they can. At the latest Eleventh Commandment thou shall attend the Sunday Family Dinner; Rae gives her the stare of Medusa for failing to investigate the case of Levi Schmidt defended by David's defense-attorney girlfriend Maggie Mason at a time when doorknobs and fixtures vanish from the house.

The final Spellman dysfunctional family tale (see *Revenge of the Spellmans*) is an entertaining entry as the "Recovering delinquent" understands family values (not just insane rules) with the help of friend Inspector Stone and of course octogenarian Morty. The story line is thin, but like the Spellmans zany and all over the place barely held together by the rules that govern plots. However the yes we can (except to felonies; that is most of the time) theme makes for an enjoyable insane finish as dizzy Izzy knows dad at sixty five may retire, but mom will always cross the line when it comes to sleuthing into the lives of her kids.

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## **Tim Chamberlain says**

Written for the KAZI Book Review (<http://kazibookreview.wordpress.com/>):

Anyone with a taste for fast-paced, funny fiction with an authentic feel will enjoy Lisa Lutz's latest novel, *The Spellmans Strike Back*.

For anyone not acquainted with the Spellmans, they are a dysfunctional family of San Francisco PIs that are as likely to be spying on each other as they are to be on a paying job. The novel is set up as a "document" written by Isabel Spellman, the thirty-something middle child of the Spellman clan, chronicling her misadventures with her twisted family business. Isabel is a wonderfully flawed heroine that feels very genuine, as if she were your funniest friend giving you the highlights of her recent past. The novel centers around her personal and professional life (both fairly active, often intertwined) and the motley cast of family, friends and enemies surrounding her.

Lutz's writing moves the various storylines along at a brisk pace without sacrificing wit or character development. By keeping the chapters brief, Lutz allows the reader to keep pace with a half dozen or so story threads and still get to know Isabel and company. She proves herself to be adept at creating realistic situations that are still very amusing. Even while laughing with and at Isabel, you will likely find yourself identifying with several of the characters.

Another testament to Lutz's skill is that she manages to incorporate some emotion into a very humorous book. She doesn't take the easy way out by tying up all loose ends or giving every storyline a happy ending, making this an entertainingly funny story that is also oddly touching at points.

The fourth book in the series, *The Spellmans Strike Back* remains very accessible without having read the previous books--though Lutz heartily encourages reading the previous "documents" in her many, funny footnoted asides. Though the book clocks in at just under 400 pages, it makes for a very fast, entertaining read that will likely leave the reader wanting to know more about the Spellmans and their universe.

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