



The Spellman Files: Document #1 (The Spellmans series)

By Lisa Lutz

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The Spellman Files is the first novel in a winning and hilarious mystery series featuring Isabel “Izzy” Spellman (part Nancy Drew, part Dirty Harry) and her highly functioning yet supremely dysfunctional family of private investigators.

Meet Isabel “Izzy” Spellman, private investigator. This twenty-eight-year-old may have a checkered past littered with romantic mistakes, excessive drinking, and creative vandalism; she may be addicted to *Get Smart* reruns and prefer entering homes through windows rather than doors—but the upshot is she’s good at her job as a licensed private investigator with her family’s firm, Spellman Investigations. Invading people’s privacy comes naturally to Izzy. In fact, it comes naturally to all the Spellmans. If only they could leave their work at the office. To be a Spellman is to snoop on a Spellman; tail a Spellman; dig up dirt on, blackmail, and wiretap a Spellman.

Izzy walks an indistinguishable line between Spellman family member and Spellman employee. Duties include: completing assignments from the bosses, aka Mom and Dad (preferably without scrutiny); appeasing her chronically perfect lawyer brother (often under duress); setting an example for her fourteen-year-old sister, Rae (who’s become addicted to “recreational surveillance”); and tracking down her uncle (who randomly disappears on benders dubbed “Lost Weekends”). But when Izzy’s parents hire Rae to follow her (for the purpose of ascertaining the identity of Izzy’s new boyfriend), Izzy snaps and decides that the only way she will ever be normal is if she gets out of the family business. But there’s a hitch: she must take one last job before they’ll let her go—a fifteen-year-old, ice-cold missing person case. She accepts, only to experience a disappearance far closer to home, which becomes the most important case of her life.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In a family of private investigators, privacy is nonexistent. The Spellman parents spy on the kids just as much as the kids spy on the parents. But after 28 years of this, middle child Isabelle wants out of the family business. Her parents agree, but only if she solves the 10-year-old cold case of a missing teenage. Amusing and entertaining, Lutz's tale of investigation, family and love is given an additional bemusing touch by Ari Graynor. She grasps the material and Isabelle's resigned disposition of both loving and loathing her family. She captures Isabelle's more emotional responses and the youthful tone of her younger sister, Rae. However, she is occasionally too breathy, literally blowing into the microphone. While these come off as sighs, they still seem to cross that line between narration and interpretation. The abridgment of some of the book's various subplots increases the speed of this already fast paced comedy-mystery.

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From Booklist

Fans of Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum series will enjoy this clever debut (the first in a series) featuring Izzy Spellman, an irrepressible 28-year-old sleuth who works for her parents' San Francisco PI firm. Members of the dysfunctional and relentlessly nosy Spellman clan include Izzy's 14-year-old sister, Rae, who engages in recreational surveillance (a fancy term for tailing people just for kicks), and her uncle Ray, a cancer survivor and recovering health-food addict who regularly disappears on liquor-drenched "Lost Weekends." Scenes showcasing the relationships among the various Spellmans are often laugh-out-loud funny. (The novel's prologue is an amusing example of the boundaries--or lack thereof--between Izzy and her mom and dad). Alas, bit after comic bit does not a mystery novel make, and only toward the end does Lutz pick up the narrative pace. Addicted to *Get Smart* reruns and forever attracted to the wrong kind of men, Izzy Spellman is definitely an appealing heroine; all this series needs to become a smashing success is a more generous dose of story and suspense. *Allison Block*

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Review

"Isabel Spellman...the love child of Dirty Harry and Harriet the Spy." -- *People*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Louis Watson:

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Robert Bowser:

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