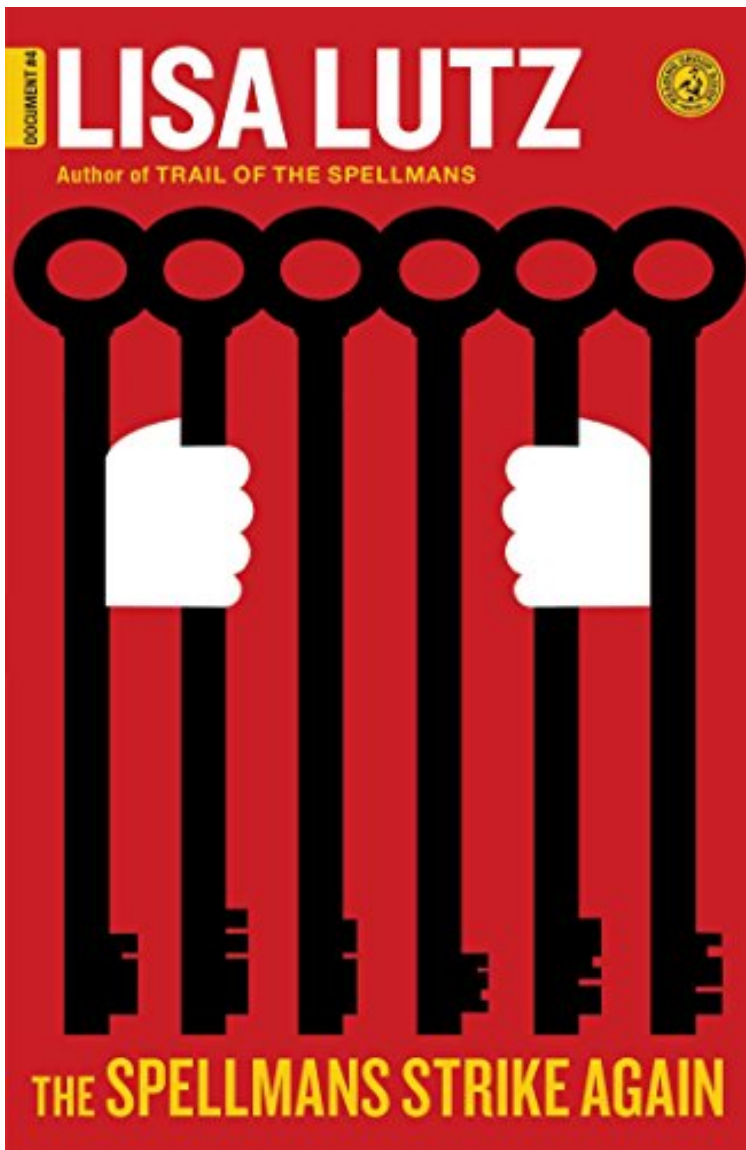


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The Spellmans Strike Again: Document #4



Par Lisa Lutz

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn 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 wont be a smooth oneFirst among her priorities as head of Spellman Investigations is to dig up some dirt on the competition, slippery ex-cop Rick Harkeya 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 butlera 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 professionalsan arrangement that doesnt thrill Connor, an Irish

bartender on the brink of becoming Ex-boyfriend #12. At Spellman headquarters, its business as unusual. Doorknobs and light fixtures are disappearing every day, Moms been spotted crying in the pantry, and a series of increasingly demanding Spellman Rules (Rule #27: No Speaking Today) cant 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 Stones mysterious interest in rekindling their relationsh . . . well, whatever it was. Just when it looks like things cant go more haywire, little sister Raes internship researching pro bono legal cases leads the youngest Spellman to launch a grassroots campaign that could spring an innocent man from jailor 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.

ExtraitFAMILY CAMPING TRIP #2Why???? we all asked when my father broke the news. A family disappearance/corporate retreat/camping trip all rolled up into one. Surely it was a bad idea, I suggested. The sentiment was reaffirmed by Rae with her constant references to the Donner Party and repeated inquiries as to which one of the Spellmans plus guest would most likely be consumed first (should it come to that). The third time this particular line of inquiry rolled around, my mother sent Rae to her room.If all of this is confusing you, perhaps I should give you a quick refresher course on the Spellmans. Although I highly recommend reading the first three documentsI if you want a true understanding of what is really going on here.My father is Albert Spellman, a onetime cop turned private investigator who really likes lunch. He is happily married to Olivia Spellman, my mother and co-owner of Spellman Investigations. Mom is an extremely attractive womanalthough lately people have been adding the disclaimer for her age, which has started to get under her skin. Other than my moms mild vanity, her most obscene characteristic is that she seems to think meddling in her childrens lives is an Olympic event. Her training regimen is positively brutal.Albert and Olivia have three children. The oldest is my brother, David, thirty-four: Formerly a poster boy for the all-American corporate male, currently an out-of-work human being. Im the middle child. Isabel, thirty-two, if you didnt catch it already. My MO from fifth grade until my midtwenties was that of the problem child. The student the principal knew by name, the neighbors feared, and the pot dealers counted on to stay afloat. Also, in the interest of honesty, there were a few arrests thrown into the mixtwo (or four, depending on how youre counting) as recently as two years ago, which I guess means that I cant argue that my problem years were confined to my youth or even my twenties. But its important to note that Ive come a long way. Therapy helped, and Im big enough to admit it was court ordered.About six months ago, after years of doubt about my future with Spellman Investigations, I committed to the job completely and agreed to slowly begin taking over the business from my parents so they can retire and learn to do macram2 or something. My father likes to say the seeds of adulthood have been planted. Hes just waiting for them to take.Theres only one other Spellman to speak ofRaeand Ill mostly let her speak for herself because you might not believe me otherwise.I suppose the most defining characteristic of my family is that we take our work home with us. If your familys job is investigating other people, you inevitably investigate each other. This single trait has been our primary point of conflict for most of my life.Finally, to round out the players on this unfortunate camping trip, I should mention Maggie. Maggie Mason, girlfriend to brother David. Maggie is a defense attorney who used to date Henry Stone (thats a whole other story I dont really want to get into right now, okay?), who happens to be the best friend3 of my now seventeen-year-old sister, the briefly aforementioned Rae. Henry is a forty-five-year-old police inspector and Rae is a senior in high school. Theyre an unlikely duo. Rae met Henry when she was fourteen and I guess she decided that they were kindred spirits. However, on the surface (and beneath the surface) they have nothing in common. At the start, Henry endured Rae. Then he got used to her. Then, when Henry was dating Maggie and Rae went to supernatural lengths to sabotage their relationship, Henry cut Rae off completely. Now they have found peace. At least thats what Ive heard. I dont get involved anymore.After Maggie and Henry broke up, over half of the Spellman clan vetted Maggie and determined that she was a quality human, the kind of person that the Spellman circle sorely needed. After an appropriate amount of time passed, the matchmaking plans for Maggie and David were successfully enacted. The couple had only been together about two months at the point of this camping trip, but since Maggie is the only person we know who can make fire from a flint, can pitch a tent, can use a compass, and actually owns bear spray, we thought it wise for our own personal safety to bring her along. That and David refused to come unless she accompanied him.Now picture me in the predawn hours, in the middle of the woods, in the middle of the Russian River, in the middle of nowhere, sharing a tent with my much younger sister, Rae, who had spent the past two days either trying to get cell

phone reception, complaining about the mosquitoes, or sleeping, during which time she carried on lengthy conversations about . . . well, honestly, I couldnt tell you. I caught phrases like Ive been sworn to secrecy, Not in this lifetime, and Youll find the treasure at the bottom of the gorge. I might have been able to sleep through her babbling if she werent a nighttime thrasher and kicker. And so, once again, there I was, sleep deprived, trapped with family, waiting for the nightmare to come to an end. My life in a nutshell. On the morning before our return-home date, I gave up on sleep, knowing that this was my last full day in the wild.

When I exited my tent, my father was trying to make coffee and failing miserably. He appeared glad for company since my mother was still slumbering in their tent. What am I doing wrong? he asked. Strong-arming your family into a cruel and unnecessary nature excursion, I suggested. No, Dad replied. What am I doing wrong with the coffee? You dont stick the coffee in the pot and boil it with the water, Dad. Are you brain-dead? You just boil the water first and use the French press Maggie brought. Werent you watching her yesterday? I replied with too much hostility. My father tried to lighten the mood with the only joke he had in his arsenal this weekend. Why dont you take a hike? he said for about the thirtieth time. Im going to dig a grave for that line and youre going to bury it, Dad. I swear to you, if you say it one more time Maggie! Dad shouted with way too much enthusiasm for waking hours. Thank God youre awake. Maggie smiled, approached the campfire, and took over the coffee making. Already the morning had improved. But the purpose of the trip had not yet been realized, and eventually we had to accept that this wasnt simply a bonding experience for the Spellmans and friend, but something even more bizarre. I should mention that no Spellman child had gone AWOL or refused to participate in the excursion since business was not to take place until the final day and, frankly, we all wanted our voice to be heard, even if it was heard above the buzz of mosquitoes. Also, I should mention that my parents said they would refuse to give a raise to anyone who didnt participate in this bonding exercise. As for David, he was only there because he thought Maggie needed more quality time with the family, as a kind of cautionary lesson. I suppose its time we get to business. The First Annual Shareholders Meeting of Spellman Investigations, Inc. [The minutes read as follows:] ALBERT: Here, here. I call this meeting to order. Are all ye present? DAVID: Dad, were not in old England. These are just shareholders minutes. State the date, the location, and the parties present. OLIVIA: Isabel, are you recording? ISABEL: Yes. And Id like to put on record that we could have had this meeting in the comfort of our own home. OLIVIA: Rae, what are you doing? RAE: Making smores. OLIVIA: Its ten A.M., sweetie. RAE: Whats your point? OLIVIA: Smores are not breakfast food. ALBERT: Excuse me, Im trying to have a meeting here. RAE: Whos stopping you? ISABEL: Put the skewer down, Rae. RAE: This is seriously the most torturous experience of my life. ALBERT: Hello? Do I need to drag out the cowbell? DAVID: Dad, if you do, Im walking right now. ALBERT: David, your presence here is necessary. I need you to draw up the minutes. DAVID: You are aware of the fact that many small companies have minutes created without a meeting. RAE: Oh my god, now you tell us! ALBERT: We have actual business to conduct. DAVID: Dad, you wanted a family vacation and used the threat of business to make it happen by refusing to give a raise to anyone who didnt attend. You got your camping trip. Why dont you just make your announcements, well go for one last hike, and then we can get out of here. ISABEL: I second that motion. OLIVIA: Stop scratching, Rae! Youll get scars. RAE: Why havent we rid the planet of mosquitoes yet? If we can practically wipe out the ozone layer, I dont see why these tiny bloodsuckers cant be systematically destroyed. MAGGIE: Put some calamine lotion on and then wait a minute or two. You should be fine. ISABEL: Can we start the meeting already? ALBERT: Thats what Im trying to do. OLIVIA: Whos stopping you? ALBERT: Quiet. Okay. Where was I? Okay, I call to order the first annual shareholders meeting of Spellman Investigations, Incorporated. Now what, David? DAVID: We have already discussed the basic issues. On paper, Isabel is now vice president and owns 25 percent of the company. However, for the next few years Isabel, Mom, and Dad will run the firm together and will take a three-way vote if there are any disputes. ISABEL: I know how that vote will turn out. ALBERT: I dont always agree with your mother, Isabel. ISABEL: Right. RAE: Lets get to the whole reason were here. Whats our cost-of-living increase? ISABEL: I should point out, Rae, that you dont even pay for your cost of living. OLIVIA: Lets just go over our plans for the year, Al. We dont need to drag this out any more than we have. ALBERT: Oh, so now youre turning on me too? ISABEL: I would really li...