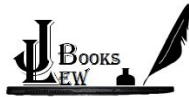


**The Witches and Wizards  
of Ozz**

**Deep Impact**

By J. Lew



# Introduction

She runs through the woods, pushing through tall weeds and bushes, running into trees, and being blinded by the darkness and the tears flowing from her eyes. Her master teleported her to the old burned-out ruins for training; now, she is running for her life. Unaware of her location or any way home, she runs to elude the darkness that follows her in silence through the woods. All she could do was run, run as far away as she possibly could. She stumbles over vines, tree roots, fallen branches, and other things she cannot see, for the night is pitch black. It is a moonless, cold, wet night, and the cold blows through her like an open window. The woods are as quiet as she has ever known, and she pauses to gather her thoughts and whispers, "What am I doing? Where can I run so that they can not find me? Oh, for heaven's sake. What was I thinking? I have a family, a good husband, and my child." The woods crackled, and the wind froze the tears on her face, but there was nothing more chilling than what she had just witnessed.

"Run," she says to herself. "Run, damn you."

All the while, something is watching her, following her from the shadows of darkness. Minutes feel like hours as she succumbs to her delusions, stopping to laugh or cry and then

turning again to the darkness. She leans against a tree, pleading, "Let me be, I beg of you. Please, just let me be!"

She turns, slipping away from the tree to run again, and releases a blood-curdling scream.

Two weeks passed, and on Wednesday, March 12, 1692, a tired, broken, and weary LeAnne Hempstead was dragged down the courthouse steps following a lengthy trial. The magistrates did not feel there was any need to read her sentence to the townspeople, who stood by waiting for what would come next. Women in the township threw stones at her and called her a witch. The word *witch* echoed through the crowd, and soon, the masses began to chant, "Stone the witch, stone the witch." No one had mercy for the poor woman, not any of the townspeople who watched, and indeed, none who were stoning her.

LeAnne noticed one lone retarded woman weeping, standing away from the crowd and shielding her face from the horrible sight. LeAnne was one of the few women who paid attention to her and allowed her to play with her daughter. LeAnne's precious little daughter died only a week before from what many believed was a high fever; soon, rumor spread, and the townspeople began to talk. The townspeople were convinced that a dark and sinister shadow hid among them. LeAnne, accused of being a witch – accused of her daughter's death! During her trial, each time she tried to stand and speak on her behalf, she fell to the courthouse floor like a person with epilepsy. The townspeople believed it was the work of her wizard master or specter to keep her from revealing his identity and hideout.

After the trial, LeAnne's husband watched helplessly as his wife curled up on the steps, pleading for her life. She was slowly dying from her wounds. The Magistrates said she and her wizard master met in the woods to conjure up spells against the township. After her death, the sheriff and his deputies searched the woods for the wizard, but their search proved fruitless.

Because of this, my aunt and uncle insisted I stay out of the woods. They are spiritually disturbed by Mrs. Hempstead's stoning, and I often find them whispering and then changing the subject each time I walk into the room. We often pray for Mr. Hempstead, who left the township before his wife's burial. "You murdered her; you bury her," he told the townspeople. Then he packed up his few belongings and left the Williams River Township for good. After that, Sunday worship was never the same; the murmurs and the pointing gave way to fear and distrust, and it didn't take long for the church to be divided. Now I go to my room afraid, not for myself, but for my Aunt and Uncle, because they fear something they will not speak of. Their fears are my ones, and all I can think about is what they say is hiding among us. I stand at my bedroom door, trying to listen to what they are saying, straining my ears until I can no longer bear it; at this point, I walk right out of my room to make them stop. Even after they go to bed, I kneel outside their door and listen.

I often pray and recite Psalm 23: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

At night, I rest upon my bed, thinking of my parents, whom I have no memory of. My aunt tells me I am much like the two of them, but more like my mother, who would roam the woods like a wild roe deer as a child. I love running through the woods and jumping over old man Kirts's fence just to frustrate him. Aunt Liz tells me my mother would have run along with me until she

married my father. Now, my life is filled with worry for my aunt and uncle. We hear each week that others were dragged from their homes in the early morning, just before daybreak. My aunt and uncle repeatedly warned me, "Stay out of the woods. It's for your own good." It seems more annoying to me now than a warning.

I try to write in my journal as much as possible these days, but this morning, I awoke from a dream that wouldn't escape my mind. I was standing by the edge of the fence between two farms, and suddenly, a horrible thing grabbed me by the arm. I screamed, awoke, and could not fall asleep because of my dream. It is now early morning, and I am writing about what I saw in my dreams. Even writing about it in my journal frightens me. This dream has put me on edge, and with all the talk going on about witches, I believe I should tear the page right from my journal and throw it into the fire, lest someone reads it, in which case I would be dragged from our home and torn from the loving arms of my aunt and uncle. It's best for all of us that I never mention this dream to anyone.

It's been a month, and I continue to dream of this most hideous thing that knows my name and calls out to me. It seems I am running from it, but I am not going anywhere, just running and crying as she calls my name.

When I awake, I fear that I am vexed by this dream and dare not tell a single soul, alive or dead. I pray every night before I go to bed, hoping never to dream of this dream again. I drift in and out of sleep, afraid of my dreams. Thinking about it makes me tremble as I lie awake and cry to sleep.

This week has been good for me; I have not had that horrible dream that keeps me awake at night. I hear my uncle and aunt talking in their room, and to my aunt's frustration, she mentions a woman's name, but I cannot hear her clearly. I do, however, hear the word *wicked*, and my aunt pleads that we leave this place before it's too late. I run quietly into my room, trying to go through the names of the people in our township,

and then the woman's name becomes clear to me: *Elmira...* Elmira Pembroke. I don't know her very well outside of Sunday worship, but come to think of it, I don't like the way her son looks at me. The way he watches me makes me bristle with fear.

It's been months now, and I can't get her name out of my head. The word *wicked* seems to coincide with my dreams. It reminds me of a quote from a play by William Shakespeare that was read to me when I was a little girl: "By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes." Oh, how I fear this thing, and now I believe it's closer to us than we think. Only the Lord can help us now.

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**Short Stories**

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