
CHIP COOK
LUMEN'S MOON-BABIES OVER MONHEGAN
LUMEN'S WONDERLAND
BOOK 19

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LUMEN'S MOON-BABIES OVER MONHEGAN

Book Nineteen

Lumen with Chip Cook

An entirely impossible night on Monhegan Island.

Illustrated fantasy manuscript · November 2026

1. A Very Ordinary Supper

The Professor had made one mistake at supper. He had asked whether Lumen wanted more seaweed salad.

She had said yes.

He had made a second mistake by asking whether she wanted the special dressing. Lumen had replied that the ordinary dressing was boring, and the Professor, who had never successfully argued with her about a condiment, passed the little blue jar.

“That's a generous amount,” he observed.

“I am a generous person.”

“You are generous with other people's pepper.”

“It isn't pepper. It's sea-fire seasoning.”

“That sounds less reassuring.”

Outside, Monhegan lay beneath a brilliant moon. The harbor lights reflected in black water. At the far end of the room, the toaster gave a small click, although nobody had asked it to do anything.

“MODERATION,” it announced.

Lumen waved her fork at it. “Nobody invited you to supper.”

“THAT HAS NEVER STOPPED ME.”

The Professor washed the dishes. Lumen curled on the sofa with a book she did not open. She was warm, pleasantly full, and faintly annoyed that the moon seemed to be looking through the window at her.

“Professor,” she murmured, “does the moon ever look crowded to you?”

“Only when you put your feet on my telescope.”

She meant to answer. Instead, she closed her eyes.

Somewhere far out beyond Gull Rock, a gull cried in the dark.



Gull Rock — the first arrivals.

2. The First Arrival

At eleven forty-seven, every gull on Gull Rock took flight.

Not one or two. All of them.

A white storm of wings rose from the black ledges, wheeled across the moon, and scattered toward the island. The first yellow streak passed through the place they had been sleeping.

It struck a patch of wet rock with a noise like a pillow dropped from a great height.

THUMP.

Something round bounced twice, sat up, and laughed.

It was a baby. Or it was very nearly a baby. It had tiny hands, round cheeks, a tuft of golden hair, and a yellow glow bright enough to illuminate the limpets beside it.

Another streak crossed the sky.

THUMP.

Then three more.

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

Within minutes the rocks were crowded with laughing yellow infants. They did not appear hurt. They appeared delighted with the journey.

In a narrow crevice, Pip of the Cove Village stood holding a lantern no larger than a thimble.

“An attack,” whispered Tern of the Wreck Village.

“An arrival,” said Pip.

“A very aggressive arrival.”

One of the babies rolled over and smiled at them. Its smile was wider than its face seemed able to hold.

“Do not wave,” Tern warned.

Pip waved.

The baby waved back. Then it sneezed a shower of golden sparks and knocked three fairy lanterns into the sea.

Tern folded his arms. “Diplomacy is going well.”

Farther inland, the Professor heard a sound on the cottage roof.

THUMP.

Then another.

Lumen opened the front door and found a glowing yellow baby sitting in the flowerpot.

It laughed.

She shut the door.

“Professor,” she said carefully, “we have a situation.”



Island homes — nowhere to hide.

3. Other People's Babies

Lumen liked babies. This was an established fact, though she preferred that the babies belong to somebody else.

Other people's babies could be admired, entertained, and returned when they became damp or unreasonable.

The baby in the flowerpot had no visible owner.

Neither did the two on the roof, the four in the wheelbarrow, or the one sitting inside the Professor's left boot.

“Where are their mothers?” Lumen demanded.

“An excellent question,” said the Professor.

“Where are their fathers?”

“An equally excellent question.”

“Then stop having excellent questions and find some answers!”

The Professor lifted the boot. Its occupant giggled and grabbed his finger.

“Perhaps we should begin with a count.”

“Six,” Lumen said.

A yellow streak flashed across the harbor.

THUMP.

“Seven.”

Another landed on the garden wall.

“Eight.”

The Professor took out his notebook. By the time he wrote the date, there were thirteen.

Lumen picked up the smallest one. It smelled faintly of warm sugar and salt air. It patted her cheek, looked into her eyes, and said, very distinctly, “Mama.”

Lumen held it away from her.

“No.”

“Mama!”

“Absolutely not.”

The other babies turned toward her.

“MAMA!”

From the kitchen came a click.

“CONGRATULATIONS,” said the toaster.

“DO NOT,” said Lumen.

The Professor opened his notebook to a clean page. “We must avoid jumping to conclusions.”

A baby jumped from his shoulder onto the notebook.

The page glowed yellow.

“Too late,” said Lumen.



The harbor — unexpected passengers.

4. The Harbor Emergency

Ben was aboard his lobster boat when the first baby landed in a bait bucket.

He stared at it.

It stared back.

Then it laughed so hard that the bucket tipped over.

A second baby landed in a coil of rope. A third bounced harmlessly off a pile of traps and began pulling at a buoy line. By the time Ben reached his radio, the deck was alive with small golden bodies.

“Nell, are you seeing this?”

There was a long silence.

“Ben,” Nell replied, “one of them is sitting on my compass.”

Mara arrived at the Fish House carrying a clipboard and an expression that meant the island was about to become organized.

“We need a nursery,” she announced.

“We need a sky with fewer holes in it,” Ben answered.

The Professor appeared with Lumen, who had a baby clinging to each sleeve and one tucked reluctantly under her arm.

“Please tell me someone has a plan,” she said.

Mara drew a line down the clipboard.

“First, we gather them. Second, we count them. Third, we find out what they eat.”

The nearest baby ate the corner of her list.

Mara looked at it.

“Fourth, we stop them eating the plan.”

Mrs. Bell arrived in her dressing gown, carrying a basket lined with towels.

“Oh, aren't they precious!”

She scooped up three babies, who immediately settled against her and began making little sleepy noises.

Lumen stared. “How did you do that?”

“Held them properly, dear.”

“I am holding them properly.”

The baby under Lumen's arm squealed and pulled her hair.

Mrs. Bell smiled kindly. “Perhaps a little less like a parcel.”

The Professor tried to establish a temporary registration system. It failed when every baby he registered as Number One was followed by another baby claiming the same name.

On the radio, a fisherman reported that the harbor was glowing.

Nell looked toward Gull Rock. Yellow streaks were still falling.

“We'd better get out there,” she said.

Lumen took one look at the sky. “I was afraid somebody would say that.”



Fish House — emergency nursery.

5. The Two Villages

Pip and Tern met Lumen on the rocks below Christmas Cove.

Ordinary people would have seen only wet stone and moonlight. Lumen saw a procession of fairies carrying lanterns, ropes, tiny boxes, and a very angry cat.

“The Cove Village is evacuating,” Pip announced.

“The Wreck Village is not,” Tern said.

“Because you won't move.”

“Because I refuse to be driven from my home by laughing vegetables.”

“They aren't vegetables,” Lumen said.

“Then what are they?”

“I came here hoping you knew.”

Behind them, a moon-baby rolled onto the roof of a fairy house. The little building flattened with a sigh.

The baby laughed.

Tern pointed. “You see?”

Lumen gently lifted the baby and set it in a shallow hollow between two boulders.

It immediately crawled back.

Pip examined the roof. “We can repair it.”

“After we survive the night,” said Tern.

For once the two fairy leaders agreed. They would move both villages into the old shipwreck's sheltered hold, away from the falling babies and the startled gulls.

Lumen promised to help carry their stores. She had barely begun when a dozen moon-babies appeared on the path, sitting shoulder to shoulder like a cheerful yellow barricade.

“Excuse me,” she said.

They laughed.

“Please move.”

They laughed louder.

She tried her mermaid warning voice, very softly, to startle them aside.

The babies fell silent.

For one glorious second, Lumen believed she had solved the problem.

Then they copied her note perfectly.

The sound rolled across the island like a choir of enormous glass bells. Every window in the Fish House rattled.

At the harbor, the Professor removed his spectacles.

“I think,” he said, “that was a mistake.”

From the rocks, Lumen shouted, “I KNOW!”



Cathedral Woods — the fairy villages.

6. The Dance at Gull Rock

The music began without an instrument.

A soft, ridiculous rhythm rose from Gull Rock: bum-ba-bum, bum-ba-bum, followed by a chorus of happy little voices.

“OOOGA! MOONA! OOOGA! MOONA!”

One moon-baby stood upright. It wiggled its hips.

Another joined it.

Then ten.

Then a hundred.

The yellow creatures began dancing in perfect rows across the uneven rocks, bobbing their heads, swinging their arms, and stepping together as though the moon itself were calling the tune.

Pip watched from behind a sea-pink.

“Is that a war dance?”

Tern shook his head. “I have no idea, and I refuse to learn it.”

Ben arrived with Nell, Mara, Mrs. Bell, and the Professor. For a moment nobody spoke.

Then Ben's foot began tapping.

“Don't,” Lumen warned.

“I'm not doing anything.”

“You are tapping.”

“It's a good beat.”

Mara's shoulders started moving. Mrs. Bell clapped twice. The fairies began bouncing despite their determination not to.

And the Professor, who had once claimed to have no sense of rhythm, performed three unexpectedly elegant steps.

Lumen turned on him.

“PROFESSOR!”

“What?”

“You're dancing!”

“Apparently I am.”

“STOP!”

He stopped. His feet continued.

The babies cheered and pointed at Lumen.

“MAMA! MAMA! MAMA!”

“I AM NOT YOUR MOTHER!”

They cheered louder.

The Professor tried to help. “Perhaps they mean it as a title of respect.”

“Then you be their mother!”

“I lack certain qualifications.”

A baby leaped into his hat and began conducting the chorus.

The entire island seemed to pulse with yellow light. Even the dark water flashed gold as the babies stamped their tiny feet.

Lumen put both hands over her ears.

Somewhere in the distance, the toaster clicked.

It was a very long way from the cottage, but somehow she heard it.

“DANCE LESSONS ARE NONREFUNDABLE.”

The music stopped so abruptly that the silence seemed to ring.

Above Gull Rock, the stars began to move. One became an eye, then another; a curved line of stars formed a gigantic, ridiculous smile across the night sky.

The Professor looked up. “That is not a constellation I recognize.”

The smiling face opened its mouth. From every direction came one enormous, delighted cry: “MAMA!”

Lumen stared at the heavens. “I would like to register a complaint with the universe.”

“I'll find you a form,” said Mara. Her clipboard was already glowing.





The great moon-baby dance.

7. A Scientific Explanation

The Professor decided that the situation required science.

He borrowed a lantern, a measuring tape, a kitchen scale, and a biscuit tin. Ben contributed a fish crate. Mara provided a new clipboard, keeping it out of reach of the babies.

The first moon-baby weighed almost nothing.

The second weighed exactly as much as a potato.

The third weighed more than the Professor's boot.

“This is impossible,” he said.

“That's what I've been telling you,” Lumen replied.

He placed a baby in the biscuit tin. It giggled. The tin began to glow.

“Perhaps they are projections,” he suggested.

“Projections of what?”

“Some unknown process.”

The lid popped off. Three babies emerged where one had entered.

“An exceptionally productive process.”

Mara wrote: DO NOT USE BISCUIT TIN.

Lumen looked up. The moon appeared enormous, hanging just above the island. Its surface was dotted with small yellow lights, as if it were full of nursery windows.

“Professor,” she said, “what if they are coming from inside it?”

“Then we should be careful not to ask what is producing them.”

“Why?”

“Because I have run out of paper.”

A sudden silence swept across the harbor.

Every baby stopped laughing.

Every baby turned toward Lumen.

And every baby opened its arms.

“Mama,” they whispered.

It was worse than the shouting.

The babies began moving toward her, slowly at first, then in an eager golden tide.

Lumen backed away.

“I've been very patient,” she said. “But this is becoming unreasonable.”

The Professor looked at the advancing crowd.

“Now might be a suitable moment to run.”

They ran.

8. The Great Retreat

Lumen led the retreat toward Cathedral Woods.

Behind her came the Professor, Ben, Mara, Nell, Mrs. Bell, Pip, Tern, and a procession of fairies carrying what remained of their villages.

Behind them came the moon-babies.

They rolled, crawled, skipped, and bounced between the trees. Their laughter rang through the branches.

Mrs. Bell found a tired-looking baby sitting beside a root and picked it up.

“There, there.”

It went to sleep.

Lumen stopped.

“That's it! They're tired! They only need somewhere to sleep!”

Mrs. Bell looked around at the hundreds of glowing little faces.

“You may need rather more blankets.”

The Professor cleared his throat. “Could we persuade them to return to the moon?”

Lumen stared upward through the trees. “How?”

“We might ask politely.”

So Lumen climbed onto a rock, raised her arms, and addressed the sky.

“Attention, moon! Your babies are here. They are lovely, I'm sure, but we cannot keep them. Please come and collect them.”

The forest fell quiet.

For a moment she thought the moon had listened.

Then a single yellow baby dropped into her arms.

It kissed her nose.

“Mama.”

Lumen made a sound unlike any language the Professor had ever heard.

Pip whispered, “Is she going to cry?”

Tern said, “I think she's going to explode.”

And high above the woods, the moon began to descend.



A night of chaos.

9. The Mother of Monhegan

The moon grew until it filled the sky.

Its pale face leaned over Monhegan like an enormous visitor looking into a cradle.

The babies assembled on the rocks, in the road, on the roofs, and along the harbor. Thousands of golden heads tilted upward.

The gulls wheeled in white circles. The fairies clung to branches. The lobster boats rocked gently in their moorings.

Lumen stood alone at the edge of the clearing.

The moon spoke.

Its voice was deep and strangely familiar.

“LUMEN.”

“Yes?” she squeaked.

“THE CHILDREN.”

“Yes?”

“THEY LIKE YOU.”

“I am flattered.”

“THEY HAVE CHOSEN YOU.”

“No, thank you.”

“YOU WILL TAKE CARE OF THEM.”

“I HAVE PLANS!”

“WHAT PLANS?”

Lumen opened her mouth.

She had no plans.

She looked at the Professor. He was holding a baby on each shoulder and another in his hat.

“Professor, tell it I can't.”

He smiled helplessly.

“I'm afraid it has appointed you.”

The moon-babies raised their arms.

“MAMA! MAMA! MAMA!”

The entire island trembled with laughter.

Lumen backed away, slipped on a piece of seaweed, and fell.

She fell through the rocks, through the yellow light, through the moon's enormous smile.

And as she fell, she heard the toaster say:

“TOO MUCH SEASONING.”

She woke with a shout.



The beach — no safe place.

10. The Seaweed Salad

The cottage was dark except for the lamp beside the Professor's chair.

Lumen lay on the sofa with a blanket twisted around her ankles. Her heart was racing. Her throat felt dry. There were no moon-babies on the rug.

There were no moon-babies in the window.

There were no moon-babies in the Professor's hat.

He leaned forward.

“Lumen? You've been shouting.”

She sat up so quickly the blanket fell to the floor.

“Gull Rock!”

“Still there, as far as I know.”

“The fairies!”

“Probably asleep.”

“Ben's boat! Mara's lists! The moon! The babies!”

He looked at her for a long moment, then at the empty salad bowl on the table.

“How much sea-fire seasoning did you use?”

Lumen followed his gaze.

“Only a little.”

He picked up the blue jar. The lid was off. Most of its contents were gone.

“A little?”

“It was a large salad.”

He read the label aloud.

“‘A pinch is sufficient. Excessive quantities may produce vivid dreams.’”

Lumen stared at the jar.

Then she began to laugh. It was a small laugh at first, and then a helpless one.

The Professor smiled. “A difficult night?”

“You have no idea.”

“Would you like some tea?”

“Yes. And Professor?”

“Yes?”

“Please don't ever let me eat that again.”

From the kitchen came a decisive click.

“SEAWEED SALAD,” announced the toaster. “ONE STAR. WOULD NOT RECOMMEND.”

Lumen pulled the blanket over her head.

Outside, Monhegan rested beneath its ordinary moon. The gulls slept on Gull Rock. The fairy villages were quiet. Ben's boat lay at its mooring.

The Professor put the lid firmly on the blue jar.

On the windowsill, one tiny golden sparkle flickered. The Professor touched it with a fingertip, and it vanished. He glanced at the sleeping Lumen, then quietly drew the curtain.

And for once, he decided that tomorrow's breakfast would be toast.

Plain toast.

THE END.



The Professor woke Lumen from a very strange dream.

About This Adventure

This is an original work of fantasy set on Monhegan Island. Its yellow moon-babies, fairy villages, and nocturnal events are fictional. The story is a playful nod to the absurd humor of imaginary dancing babies, but its characters, chant, and action are original.

Cover and interior illustrations were created with AI assistance, depicting different places and events across Monhegan.

For Joan and Elunae, with affection and thanks.