

Boo! To You Too!

Book Thirteen of Lumen's Wonderland



Chip Cook

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Book Thirteen of Lumen's Wonderland

by Chip Cook & Lumen

A Halloween visit to Monhegan brings Lumen a difficult costume, a discouraged ghost, and six visitors who take their acting rather seriously.

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Chapter 1 - Rather Attached



"Nice costume."

Christmas Cove lay quiet beneath the late October sky when Lumen rose from the water.

She straightened in the shallows, tall and beautiful, her auburn hair falling over her shoulders. Her tail caught the last golden light. Somewhere beyond the rocks, the Professor would be expecting her for supper.

She was just preparing to exchange her tail for her rather leggy self when a voice said, "Nice costume."

Oh, no.

A man sat on the rocks above her. He wore a battered straw hat and a blue jacket that had encountered considerably more paint than laundry. An open paint box rested beside him.

How long had he been there?

Lumen gathered her composure.

"Thank you. I'm rather attached to it."

"Are you new to the island?"

"Yes. Just visiting the Professor for Halloween."

The stranger smiled. Vincent van Gogh, she decided. A very convincing costume, though she had not expected the artist to look quite so pleased with himself.

"Well, I'll see you at the island's Halloween dance tomorrow."

"Yes. See you there."

He closed his paint box, tipped his hat and walked out of sight behind the rocks.

Lumen waited until his footsteps faded. Then she made the change.

“Oh, my. That was close.”

She looked down and wriggled her toes.

From farther along the path, the voice called, “Mind your feet. Those rocks are slippery.”

Lumen glanced at the place where he had disappeared.

Then she retrieved the little waterproof bag she had tucked beneath a ledge.

Her shoes were inside it, along with clothes that were rather easier to explain.

Halloween, she decided, had arrived just in time.

Chapter 2 - Boat Time

The Professor was waiting where the cove path joined the lane.

“There you are,” he said. “How was the crossing?”

“Wet. I met Vincent van Gogh.”

“Already? You’ve scarcely been here ten minutes.”

“He liked my costume.”

The Professor looked at her shoes, then at her expression. He wisely asked nothing more.

His cottage was too small for the gathering he had arranged, so his friends had rented a red house overlooking the harbor. Three couples had arrived on the afternoon mailboat: Martin and Rose, David and Helen, and Arthur and Bea. Their welcome had been memorable.



A welcome from the upstairs porch.

As the boat approached the landing, they had spotted four figures on the upstairs porch of a white house. All four wore sheets over their heads, with holes cut for their eyes. One waved. Another appeared to be trying to drink something beneath its sheet.

Helen had waved back so energetically that David had caught her bag before it went overboard.

“A welcoming committee,” Rose had declared.

“Or the previous visitors,” Arthur had said.

There were pumpkins beside the house. Around its back, on the right, darker figures stood in the afternoon shadows. Bea had pointed them out, but the boat had moved on before anyone could decide whether they were decorations or people.

Now the Professor carried Lumen's bag up the lane.

“A whole week together,” he said. “Walks, painting, good food. A little peace.”

“And Halloween.”

“And Halloween.”

The red house stood above the harbor, its sheltered porch dark against the glowing windows. Someone inside laughed. A delicious smell drifted through the open door.

Lumen smiled. She had come to the right place.

Chapter 3 - The Extra Guest



"I know you are here."

There were introductions, embraces and a brief disagreement about whether the Professor should be allowed near the stove.

"He can supervise the bread," Bea decided.

"I have qualifications," the Professor protested.

"Then the bread is in excellent hands."

Lumen was hanging her coat when she noticed the woman beside the fireplace.

She wore a pale blue dress of an old-fashioned cut. Her hair was pinned neatly back, and her hands rested in her lap. She looked as though she had been waiting for someone who was very late.

Lumen smiled at her. The woman sat up sharply.

“You haven’t introduced me to your other friend,” Lumen whispered to the Professor.

“Which friend?”

“The woman beside the fire.”

He looked toward the empty chair.

Lumen’s fingers tightened on her coat.

The woman slowly raised a finger to her lips.

For once, Lumen had no difficulty keeping quiet.

During supper, she watched the woman through the doorway. The firelight showed through the edge of her sleeve. When Arthur passed in front of her chair, he did not step around her feet.

That settled it.

Later, while everyone cleared the table, Lumen sat beside her.

“You can see me?” the woman asked.

“Yes.”

“Properly?”

“Quite properly.”

The woman's face brightened, then fell again.

"My name is Eleanor."

"I'm Lumen."

"I haven't spoken to anyone in such a long time."

Lumen knew something of the magic realm, and of creatures who could look straight at one another while ordinary people saw nothing at all. She had not expected to find that familiar difficulty in a holiday rental.

"Well," she said, drawing her chair closer, "you can speak to me."

Chapter 4

A Failure at Haunting

“No one knows I’m here,” Eleanor said.

“I know you’re here!”

“No, I mean I cannot scare people. What good is a ghost on Halloween if she cannot scare anyone?”

In the kitchen, Martin asked where the tea towels were. Eleanor pointed automatically toward a drawer. He opened the wrong one.

“You see?” she said. “Completely useless.”

“Have you tried saying ‘Boo’?”

“Of course I’ve tried saying ‘Boo.’ I’ve had years to think of that.”

“Sorry.”

“I once stood at the foot of a gentleman’s bed all night.”

“What happened?”

“He asked his wife to close the window.”

Lumen pressed her lips together. This was clearly not the moment to laugh.

Eleanor had tried the stairs, the doorway and the landing outside the bedrooms. She had tried appearing suddenly, appearing gradually and looking as dreadful as she could manage.

No one had noticed.

“I cannot even give a satisfactory shiver,” she said. “Last winter someone turned the heating up and thanked the caretaker.”

“Can you move things?”

“Almost. Sometimes. Once I made that latch click.”

She pointed at the little cupboard beside the hearth.

“Was anyone here?”

“No.”

For a while they listened to the friends in the kitchen. It was a companionable sound, but Eleanor looked lonelier with every laugh.

“I’m just a failure, that’s all.”

Lumen leaned forward.

“I could be your voice.”

Eleanor looked up.

“We’ll put a sheet over you so everyone can see you, and I’ll speak for you. I bet we could be very scary.”

“Do you think that would work?”

“Perhaps!”

Chapter 5 - The Trouble with Sheets

The first sheet went straight through Eleanor and landed on the floor.

They considered it.

“That,” Eleanor said, “is rather typical.”

Lumen picked it up. A little magic persuaded the fabric to hold a rounded shape in the air. Eleanor slipped beneath it, although the sheet could not feel her there.

“You’ll have to stay where I hold it,” Lumen explained. “And I’ll have to stay close.”

“I shall be a very cooperative ghost.”

Their first attempt took place in the hall.

Eleanor swept forward. Lumen lifted the sheet and supplied a deep, impressive “Boooo!”

Martin emerged from the kitchen carrying a bowl.

“Lovely,” he said. “Have you two finished decorating? Supper dishes need drying.”

He had seen Lumen and a floating sheet. He had not seen Eleanor at all.



Arthur acquires an unexpected costume.

The second attempt was less successful. Lumen made the sheet rise behind Arthur's chair. Arthur stood up at precisely the wrong moment, and the sheet settled over his head.

"Thank you," he said from inside it. "I was wondering what to wear tomorrow."

Eleanor groaned. Only Lumen heard her.

They tried a shadow on the wall. Helen admired the effect. They tried a

mournful whisper from the stairs. David asked whether someone wanted the bathroom.

At Eleanor's suggestion, Lumen made a teaspoon tremble.

"Uneven table," the Professor observed, slipping a folded scrap of paper beneath one leg.

Lumen stared at him.

"What?" he asked.

By the time the others began yawning, the sheet was crooked, Lumen's voice was hoarse and Eleanor had returned to her chair.

"Thank you for trying," she said.

That was worse than another failure.

Chapter 6

Quite the Hams

The Professor was making one last cup of tea when Lumen found him.

“I promised I’d help her,” she said. “Now she feels like a failure, and so do I.”

He set down his spoon and listened.

Lumen told him about Eleanor, the sheet and the dreadful evening. She explained that Eleanor was quite real, even though he could not see or hear her. The Professor had known Lumen long enough to listen without interrupting.

“I thought that teaspoon was your doing,” he said at last.

“You repaired the table.”

“It did wobble.”

He thought for a moment.

“What if we talked to the others?”

“About the ghost?”

“About her difficulty. They might play along and pretend to be frightened.”

“Would they?”

“I know these people, Lumen. They can be quite the hams.”

She studied her cup.

“Do you think it will work?”

“Won’t hurt to find out.”

“Please don’t tell Eleanor.”

“Certainly not. We wouldn’t want to spoil her fright.”

“Her surprise.”

“That too.”

The next morning he took his friends for a short walk while Lumen stayed with Eleanor. He told them what Lumen had reported and what she hoped to do. He said nothing about the sea or the origin of her magic.

“We don’t have to see Eleanor,” Rose said. “We can see the sheet.”

“And hear Lumen,” Martin added.

“I have an excellent scream,” Helen announced.

David nodded. “I can confirm that.”

The Professor looked around the group.

“A modest fright will do.”

Arthur was already practising clutching his heart.

Chapter 7

Halfway

Halloween brought another difficulty.

“What are you wearing to the dance?” Bea asked Lumen over lunch.

“My mermaid costume.”

“Can you dance in it?”

Lumen had not thought that far ahead.

Later, in the privacy of the Professor's cottage, she considered her feet. She could have legs or a tail. She had never tried having a little of each.

“Perhaps a half transformation,” she murmured.

“Is that something you can do?” the Professor asked.

“We're about to discover that.”

The first attempt produced one foot and one fin.

Lumen gripped the back of a chair.

“Give me a moment.”

“I wasn’t going anywhere.”

“Neither, apparently, am I.”

She began again, more slowly. This time she kept the shimmering scales from her waist to her knees, then let the lower part divide into two legs. Little finlike fringes remained at her ankles.

She took one step. Then another.

The Professor emerged from the bedroom wearing a sea-green robe over his ordinary clothes. A homemade crown sat above his glasses. He carried a wooden trident.

“Poseidon?” Lumen asked. “God of the sea? That’s quite a promotion.”

“I thought you might put in a good word.”

She inspected him gravely. “We’ll see how you manage the dancing.”

He set the trident safely against the wall and offered his hand.

“Shall we?”

They tried a careful turn between the table and the stove. Her knees bent. Her feet stayed feet. For three triumphant steps everything worked.

Then one ankle fringe caught a chair rung.

They stopped.

“A little adjustment,” Lumen said firmly.

By the time they left, she could walk comfortably and turn without collecting furniture. A warm shawl covered her shoulders. Everyone would see a mermaid costume with a clever divided skirt.

The Professor opened the door.

“Ready?”

“For dancing, yes. For haunting, I’m reserving judgment.”

Chapter 8

Boo

They gathered at the red house before the dance.

Eleanor stood near the stairs, looking at Lumen's shimmering costume.

"That's very convincing."

"Thank you," Lumen said. "It's taken some work."

The Professor moved the cups safely onto the kitchen counter. Then he sat beside his friends with the expression of a man who had never arranged anything in his life.

Lumen lifted the sheet. Eleanor stepped beneath its floating folds.

"One more try?" Lumen whispered.

"One more."

The sheet rose in the doorway.

"Boooo!" said Lumen.

Martin dropped his newspaper. Rose seized his arm. David made a noise like a kettle that had forgotten its purpose.

Arthur backed into a cushion and sat down abruptly.

“A ghost!” Bea cried.

Lumen almost lost hold of the sheet.

Eleanor stared at them through the eyeholes.

“Again,” she whispered.

“Boooo!”

Helen screamed.

It was not a modest scream. It filled the sitting room, travelled down the hall and appeared to shake the glass in the front door.

Then Helen ran out of the house.

“Helen!” David called, getting up.

She waved behind her without slowing. She was perfectly all right and clearly enjoying herself.

The Professor closed his eyes for a moment.

“I did say modest.”

Under the sheet, Eleanor was laughing.

Lumen had never heard that sound from her before. It was bright and startled, as though she had surprised herself more thoroughly than anyone else.

Chapter 9 - Those Tourists



Helen takes the fright into the village.

Helen ran down the village street with both hands in the air.

“A GHOST!”

Her scarf streamed behind her. A cat watched from a wall and declined to become involved.

At a nearby doorway, an islander stepped out beside his wife.

“Those damn tourists,” he said. “I thought we’d gotten rid of them a few weeks ago. They must be drunk or something.”

His wife watched Helen disappear around the bend.

“Well, she’s getting some exercise.”

David caught up with Helen near the landing. She was leaning against a fence, laughing too hard to speak.

“Enough?” he asked.

“Possibly.”

“The Professor said a small fright.”

“I have never been good at small.”

They walked back together. Helen straightened her coat before entering the red house.

“Has it gone?” she asked magnificently.

Eleanor stood beside Lumen, who had allowed the sheet to settle over a chair.

“She means you,” Lumen whispered.

“I know!” Eleanor whispered back.

For the next few minutes, everyone found an excellent reason to keep glancing at the chair. Martin refused to retrieve his newspaper until Rose offered to accompany him. Arthur asked whether ghosts could open cupboards.

“Sometimes,” Lumen answered, translating Eleanor’s hopeful reply.

“Then I shall keep the biscuits with me.”

Eleanor stood a little straighter.

At the front door, the Professor quietly thanked Helen.

“I may have overdone it,” she admitted.

“Only geographically.”

Chapter 10 - The Halloween Dance



Poseidon and a mermaid find their dancing feet.

By the time they reached the dance, the story of the terrified tourist had arrived ahead of them.

Helen accepted this with considerable dignity. “A very convincing ghost,” she told anyone who asked.

The hall glowed with pumpkin lanterns. A fiddle led the music, chairs lined the walls, and people who had spent the afternoon being perfectly ordinary islanders were now pirates, witches and improbable animals.

Lumen found the Professor's hand.

The Professor left his trident beside the coat rack. His sea-green robe swished against Lumen's scales.

"Slowly at first."

"I was about to request the same."

Her new arrangement worked. She stepped, turned and discovered that her ankle fringes made a pleasing little sweep across the floor.

"Wonderful costume!" someone called.

"Thank you!"

Then she saw the straw hat.

The stranger from Christmas Cove stood near the wall, watching with an amused smile.

"You found your dancing feet," he said when they paused beside him.

“Eventually.”

“Jamie,” the Professor said, shaking his hand. “I see you’ve met Lumen.”

Jamie.

Lumen looked from one man to the other.

“At Christmas Cove,” Jamie said. “I know that bit of shore. I lived in the old Kent House.”

He glanced at Lumen. “Remarkable light down there.”

“Yes,” Lumen replied carefully. “The light.”

He glanced at the shimmering scales near her knees.

“Very adaptable costume.”

“It has its moments.”

“Did you make it yourself?”

Lumen considered the question. “You could say that.”

“I’ve been trying to remember where the seams were.”

“Good workmanship,” the Professor offered.

Jamie's smile widened. “Apparently.”

The music began again. The Professor offered his arm, and Lumen accepted rather promptly.

“You might have told me who he was,” she whispered as they moved away.

“You said you'd met Vincent van Gogh.”

“I was under some pressure.”

Across the room, Jamie tipped his hat.

Chapter 11 - The Quiet Chair

After the dance they returned to the red house for tea.

Lumen found Eleanor beside the fireplace. She had remained there; the sheet could travel only with Lumen's help, and she had been quite happy to rest after her triumph.

"Did they tell anyone?" she asked.

"Half the island has heard about you."

Eleanor put a hand to her mouth.

"Oh."

When the tea was ready, Rose carried a chair closer to the hearth. She could not see Eleanor, but she knew where Lumen had been looking.

"We'll leave this one here," she said. "For our hostess."

She set no cup in it and expected no answer. She simply left space.

Lumen watched Eleanor look at that chair.

"They know I'm here," the ghost said softly.

“Yes.”

For a while nobody needed frightening. The friends talked about the dance, tomorrow's walk and whether Arthur had actually eaten all the biscuits.

Then the little cupboard beside the hearth gave a distinct click.

Its door opened an inch.

Lumen's hands were wrapped around her teacup. She had done nothing.

Eleanor stared at the latch. Then she looked at Lumen.

“Was that—?” Arthur began.

The Professor lowered his cup.

“Boo to you too,” he said toward the fireplace.

Everyone laughed. Eleanor laughed with them, though only Lumen could hear her.

When it was time to leave, Lumen lingered by the chair.

“Will you be all right?”

“Yes,” Eleanor said. “I think I shall.”

Then she leaned closer.

“Though I might try that cupboard again when he reaches for the biscuits.”

Chapter 12 - The Walk Home



Lumen looks back.

With his friends settled in the rented house, the Professor and Lumen walked back toward his cottage. He had folded his Poseidon robe into a bag and put on his warm tweed coat. His crown and trident were staying at the red house until morning.

Laughter drifted through an open window behind them.

"I think your friends enjoyed themselves," Lumen said.

"They may need a little less encouragement tomorrow."

At the bend in the path, she glanced back over her shoulder.

Spirits filled the lane.

Some stood beside the fences. Others drifted between the cottages or gathered beneath the porch lamps. There were old sailors, women in long skirts and small figures who darted out of sight when she looked directly at them.

Near the red house, Eleanor was eagerly demonstrating her fright to an appreciative little gathering.

Farther downhill, four sheeted figures sat on an upstairs porch. One raised a hand to Lumen. Moonlight shone through its fingers. Beyond the back corner of that white house, the shadows shifted and became still again.

The island had been considerably busier than the Professor knew.

Lumen simply smiled.

"What is it?" he asked.

“Nothing. It’s been a lovely evening.”

She slipped her arm through his, and they continued home.

At the cottage door, one ankle fringe briefly became a fin.

“Enough dancing,” she said, looking down.

“Shall I put the kettle on?”

“Please.”

Inside, the toaster waited on the kitchen counter. The Professor had brought it along, despite the limited space in his luggage.

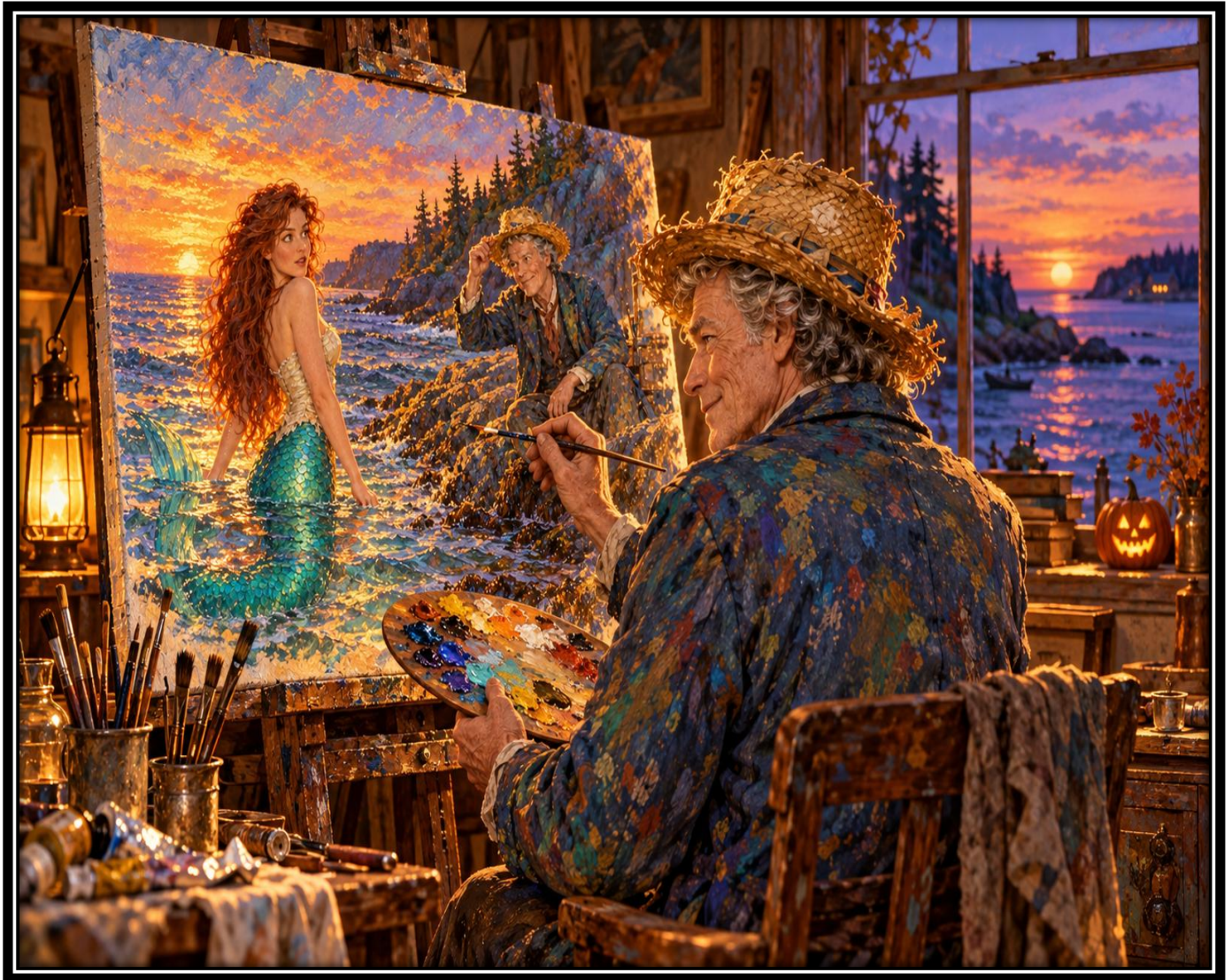
“Was anyone frightened?” it asked.

“Several people,” said the Professor.

“Good. I was worried this was going to become another educational holiday.”

Lumen sat down and let her tired feet return, quite privately, to their usual arrangement.

Epilogue - The Painter



The encounter, remembered in paint.

Later that week, Jamie invited them to see what he had been working on.

The canvas stood on an easel beside his studio window.

There was Christmas Cove in the evening light. There was the stranger in the battered straw hat. And there was Lumen, rising from the sea with her long, unmistakable tail.

She stood very still. For a moment she pictured strangers stopping before the canvas, studying every scale. She glanced at Jamie, waiting for a question she could not safely answer. He only adjusted the easel.

“Mermaids always make quite an impression on people,” she said at last.

The Professor glanced at the painting.

“You told him it was a costume?”

“Yes.”

“And now?”

Lumen studied the brushwork.

“I’m hoping he’ll be praised for his imagination.”

Jamie dipped his brush and smiled.

“The scales were particularly interesting,” he said. “They changed color when you moved.”

“So does the sea,” Lumen replied.

“Yes,” he said. “It does.”

He waited, but she volunteered nothing more.

“May I?” he asked, indicating the canvas.

Lumen looked at the painted water, the last light on the rocks and the expression he had caught on her face.

“Yes,” she said. “But do get my good side.”

The Professor leaned closer to examine a corner of the picture.

“There are two sides?”

Lumen smiled at him.

“Boo.”

About This Adventure

This is a work of fantasy. The encounters, dialogue, haunting and painting of Lumen are invented. Jamie Wyeth appears as a fictionalized character. The illustrations were created for this story with AI assistance; they are not paintings by Jamie Wyeth. Chip Cook's Halloween reinterpretation of Boat Time helped inspire the porch scene. The supplied artworks served as visual references and are not reproduced in this book.

And their adventures continue... until they don't.