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The Bumble: Behind the Myth

With a ferocious roar and jagged, dangerous teeth, capable of eating a reindeer in a single
bite, the Bumble elicits fear and hostility among most people. He is portrayed as a “fiend,” a
creature without a conscience, and lacking in basic intelligence. Because of these reasons, most
believe that the Bumble deserved to have his teeth removed, as this was the only way to tame
“the beast.” These depictions from the iconic Rankin/Bass film, *Rudolph the Red-Nosed
Reindeer* are cemented in the minds of the public (*Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer*). What is
lesser known, however, is that Bumble was an actor playing a role. The real Bumble was never
any of these things. A sensitive, peace-loving scholar and healer, the Bumble may be the most
misunderstood character of all time.

In 1964, Bumble was discovered by the impulsive prospector, Yukon Cornelius, whose
relentless search for silver and gold led him to a remote area of Greenland called Avangersuaq. It
was there he stumbled upon Bumble, silently meditating in a cave, a copy of *Siddhartha*
translated into Danish at his side. Cornelius was struck by the good-natured Bumble, who was
studying at the time to become a natural healer. With Cornelius, he shared his fish and kelp,
which makes up most of his diet (“Mythical Creatures” 99). When asked about his origins,
Bumble was contemplative. Truthfully, he admitted that he didn’t know his parents and did not
have a family (Bumble 60).
Bumble related that during one especially long, meditative state, he had a vision of a laboratory and a flash of brilliant light. After discussions with the local Inughuit tribesmen, Bumble theorized that he was the product of genetic engineering at military facility called Camp Century (Bumble 100). Since he has features of a gorilla and polar bear, it is feasible that Bumble was created in this laboratory during the late fifties in the midst of the Cold War. Since there were many nuclear tests going on at the time, this would account for his unusual size (“US Military”). These are just theories however, and Bumble has vowed never to learn the truth. “I do not need to question any longer,” declares Bumble, “because I have discovered peace in self-acceptance” (Bumble 101).

As a young Bumble, the lack of a family unit caused him to be introverted and anxious about the world. He coped with his anxiety through reading and meditation (Bumble 47). With assistance from the Inuit population, he learned their native language, Inuktun, as well as Danish. Understanding Danish gave Bumble insight into the entire world through books. Most of the books that Bumble likes to read focus on topics such as natural foods and medicine, meditation, and spirituality. Bumble likes to fish and shares his catch with the locals, who bring him books from the library and keep his existence a secret (65). As Steen and Otzen confirm, “Bumble needs solitude to not only reflect, but to keep himself safe from those who would take advantage of him” (26).

Cornelius told Bumble about an exciting opportunity in Canada. The film company Rankin/Bass was making a new Christmas movie and needed a large creature to act in it. Bumble was thrilled with the idea, but apprehensive. The Inughuit warned him not to trust them, as they had been forced to leave their lands against their will by the Danish and did not trust
outsiders. But Bumble saw this as his opportunity to leave the cave and meet new and interesting people. Taking nothing with him, he walked over the North Pole and immediately commenced filming the movie *(Mythical Creatures 99).*

Little did Bumble know that he was being used. Because he did not understand English and Cornelius did not translate English into Danish for him, he did not know that he was cast as a villain. It was not until after he had seen the finished film did he hear the soundtrack and realized that they had changed his personality (100). He thought during the filming that he was protecting the reindeer from an incoming storm, not eating them, as he is a pescetarian and only eats fish (Bumble 85). Adding injury to insult, Bumble was tricked during production, knocked out by a large rock, put under anesthesia, and had all of his teeth removed. Rankin/Bass then deposited the disoriented and disillusioned Bumble back to his cave in Greenland *(Mythical Creatures 101).*

Hoping that the film would be forgotten, Bumble was saddened to hear that it was an enormous success and that his reputation would be tarnished forever. On top of that, his toothless state made it extremely difficult for him to eat fish, his main source of protein. With the help of a tribal lawyer, Bumble sued Rankin/Bass for assault and battery and defamation of character. He easily won the lawsuit and was awarded $1,000,000 in damages (Winter, “Bumble’s”). Bumble used some of the money to replace his missing teeth with custom-made implants. He also built a healing center for the tribe and after several years, became a shaman. A shaman, or angakkoq, is an important member of the tribe. He is a healer and resolves intertribal tensions and conflicts (Morris 33). Bumble has forgiven the Rankin/Bass Production
Company and harbors no ill will towards them. According to Bumble:

There have been, and will always be those who attempt to take advantage of others for their personal gain. I believe this is part of human nature. I seek only to be left alone to reflect upon my place in the universe and help others when needed. I have no desire other than this. (Winter, “Bumble Seeks”)

Facing betrayal and mislabeling could have made Bumble bitter and resentful. The experience, however, has made him more at ease with his place in the world. Bumble has no regrets for leaving his cave and going out into the public eye. Now sure of himself, Bumble understands that he is best off in Greenland, surrounded by his books and people who care about him. With his wealth, he can help those in need, as he himself does not require much. As a Shaman, Bumble meditates and is happy using his calming nature to heal others. He also has documented his road to redemption in the international, best-selling autobiography, *Bumble: The True Story*. Though greatly misunderstood, Bumble has proven that anyone (or anything) can be more than they appear.
Works Cited


<https://www.whoi.edu/beaufortgyre/history/history_dew.html>.
