

THE HOLLOW PENTAGON

by Mark Bradfield

The last straw had been young Miss Hollow. In the years that they had been on Earth, gathering information, infiltrating the highest echelons of every organisation, cutting the guts out of the very people that had taken them in, 'Pentagon' had never met anyone quite like Tanya Hollow.

She was kind, genuine, warm, reasonable, strong, unshakeable and believed deep down that everyone deserved a chance to be the best that they could be. And she had given Pentagon that chance. He had always been amused as she tried to pronounce his name. Her earth tongue too thick and brutish to wrap itself around the many conflicting syllables that made up his designation – sorry name. In the end she just called him Pentagon and it stuck. After all that's where he'd met her and that's where they both 'worked'.

Before your dirty little mind goes there – there was no physical element involved at all – Grays and Humans just weren't physically compatible. It was just a genuine friendship.

When the hammer fell, it surprised even him. He had been enjoying his assignment. He'd even started wearing their clothes instead of his standard garb. It seemed to make the other humans more comfortable around him. It left him stunned – off balance – shocked would be a better description. When the Gray Heavies took the Pentagon, Tanya was amongst the missing.

It had taken weeks of subtle enquiry, working the collaborators and his Gray comrades but eventually his labours bore fruit and he managed to track her down. It had brought a groan to his lips when he discovered that she, along with thousands of others had been delivered to Doctor Rameri at the beginning of the occupation.

This was bad – The 'good' Doctor was nothing of the sort. A vile creature that thrived on the pain of others – most of which he inflicted himself. He had been given 'carte blanche' to carry out any and all procedures that would raise the fighting abilities of the Grays to a higher level. Extra limbs, improved vision, stamina, healing, poison resistance, gene splices and other 'procedures' to include cybernetic enhancements had been 'beta' tested on those first unfortunates.

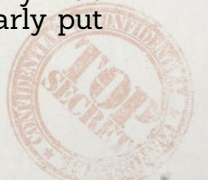
The tel-Net told a horrifying tale of needless deaths, macabre experimentation and towards the bottom of the list a handful of successes.

Pentagon could hardly bare to look, but there at the end of the list was Miss Tanya Hollow. All the procedures had been successful – for her – but at the cost of thousands for whom they weren't. It also showed him where she was being 'tested'. It wouldn't take him long to get there.

Stashing his human clothes carefully in a cylindrical carryall he donned his Gray apparel. This gave him certain privileges. He was after all much celebrated as being one of the five that had given them a 'toe in the door' on Earth. He quite literally walked into the laboratory where Rameri was carrying out his work. Making his way down the corridors, the stench of blood and offal the moaning and the screams almost overpowering his keen senses. He found the cell allocated to Miss Tanya.

He sensed her in the cell – the same Miss Tanya but different – he couldn't quite tell – almost like there were others in the cell with her.

He slid the bars back and pulled the door open. A guttural roar of pain and fury was unleashed followed by a blue blur that launched itself from the darkness and nearly put him through the wall.



'Miss Tanya! It's me - Pentagon'

The creature in front of him had the face of his dear friend but the rest of her was unfamiliar.

'Pentagon? ... is ... that ... you?'

'I'm so sorry, I never thought..... I'm glad I found you Miss Tanya ... I've been going out of my mind for weeks'

He reached to help her up but she shrunk away from him. Pentagon's anger rose up in him. He'd never felt this before. One of the most decent people in the milky way - his friend - had not deserved this.

'Pentagon ... They hurt me. So much... so many times.'

He reached out again and this time she took his hand. She was heavier than he had remembered.

'This way, I know somewhere we can catch our breath.'

'Thank you Pentagon, ... thank you.' She wearily replied

Pentagon forced the door on a storeroom abandoned since the invasion. Sitting Miss Tanya on a chair he checked the tel-Net again for the full extent of the procedures that had been visited upon his friend.

Miss Tanya Hollow - Multiple Gene Splice - Multiple recovery treatments - Multiple Combat assessments - Multiple recovery treatments.

DNA - Unbinding - in preparation for future splicing.

Lizard DNA - to aid in rapid limb and organ regeneration - combat tested.

Rat DNA - To aid in surviving poisons - Combat Tested.

Gorilla DNA - aid in muscle and bone growth - Combat Tested.

Owl DNA - For low light situations - Combat Tested.

Nano surgery - Pending.

Non indigenous Combat enhancement - Pending.

He knew what combat testing had meant for the human guinea pigs. They'd been shot, stabbed, dismembered, poisoned, irradiated, lasered - basically had everything in the Gray and Devoli arsenal used upon them.

Gritting his teeth Pentagon turn to his friend 'Time to go Miss Tanya, here put these on.'

Opening his Gray carryall he pulled out boots, cargo pants and a tee shirt.

He pulled out his human clothes too and the pair stood back to back as they changed.

There were a couple of other things in there too, an old tommy gun he'd fallen in love with at a range many years ago and a Gray Pulse cannon.

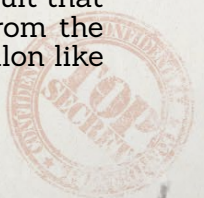
He turned and looked at Miss Tanya as a result of the 'treatments' she would have looked freakish a couple of months ago. But now she fitted right in.

There were some supplies on the shelves - water, some cans, candy.

'Pentagon, I need to eat - I'm starving.'

'Sure - let me sort that out' - He lifted the bags and cans and brought them over. Like an animal she grabbed them before he'd even set them down. Tearing into them with her teeth and hands cans and wrappers never stood a chance.

Tanya eventually noticed after three bottles of water and four cans of meat and fruit that her friend was watching with his mouth wide open. Small cuts on her tongue from the tin were already healing. Holes had been punctured in those same tins with her talon like



nails. The blue of her skin grew 'brighter' and fuller as she rehydrated.

In those few minutes she began to feel more like her old self – a satisfied smile even crossed her lips.

In those same few minutes Pentagon's decision to make his people pay for what they'd done to his friend and no doubt hundreds of thousands and even millions across this Earth had been made.

He took a moment and stuffed the carryall with food and water, then reaching for the Tommy gun he chambered a round. Then he slung the carryall over his shoulder and made for the door.

'Follow me and stay close to the wall – I'll protect you – they wont hurt you again!'

'Give me that !' Tanya hissed grabbing the carryall with the Pulse cannon in it. 'Those devils are going to pay..... a lot!'

'Show me how this works Pentagon – I'm not going back in that cell again!'

Pentagon pressed a panel on the side of the alien rifle and activated it – it hummed.

'Point and pull'

'Point and pull? – Works for me'

They stepped back out in the corridor and made for the exit. Getting in had been easy – getting out was going to be ... a little more difficult.

It was, Tanya picked up a round in the chest – never even saw it coming – she went down like a sack of potatoes. Pentagon's rage flared up and he pulled on the trigger of the Tommy gun. The barrage of heavy slugs demolished the Devoli reptilians standing in front of him and the Gray Heavies behind them. He never noticed the gun click empty as he charged the remaining Gray infantry.

He realised his mistake only when he'd covered half the distance between himself and his old comrades. He wasn't going to make it! He could see it in their eyes too as they drew a bead on him – smiling at the traitor – Doctor Rameri would make sure they got to interrogate him later – after he was dead.

Just then a volley of pulse cannon rounds came out of nowhere and vapourised the infantry. No sticking plaster was going to fix that. Skidding to a halt he turned to see his friend getting up from her knee. The hole in her chest already healing over.

Pentagon felt a wave of relief wash over him.

'I thought I'd lost you .. again, Miss Tanya'

'Never thought I'd be glad that worm did what he did – but I am right now!!'

He reached to help her up.

'By the way, do you have another shirt in that bag of yours, mine has a hole in it!'

'Of.. course Miss Tanya' Reaching into the bag he pulled out one of the other shirts he'd brought. He remembered human females being crazy about sizes of clothes and had brought a few.

'Oh and Pentagon, you can call me Tanya now!'

'Okay ... M... Tanya!'

She pulled the new shirt on over the old and they made their way out of the lab section. Knowing as he did Gray protocols they easily avoided guard patrols and were a mile away when they heard the warning hoots of the Gray alarms go off.

