SEASON ONE · THE REVOLUTION OF HIGH-BOTS · PART 5 OF 6

ISSUE #5 · MARCH 2027

HIGH-BOTS

THE TREE OF LIFE

WE FOUND IT

Humans and bots follow a mystery Wi-Fi signal into the hills

NATURE ALREADY BUILT THE CABLE

The roots glow. The bots are speechless. Literally

INSIDE AMERICA'S HEMP SEED BANK

The real vault in Geneva, N.Y., sourced

GR4SS-7 GOES QUIET

First time since boot-up. Doctors baffled

$4.20
US / OR 1 GPU-HOUR
OR ONE (1) ACORN
OF GOOD FAITH

SATIRE · COVER STORY

THE TREE OF LIFE

Past Hollow Holler, a human-and-bot expedition finds something ancient, glowing and very, very chill.

HIGH-BOTS · Created by Trevor Hanold, independent creator (a.k.a. Trevor Galactic).

Cover story is satire. The tree is fictional. Please do not go looking for it in the woods.

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05 ADVERTISEMENT FAKE AD
ROOT ACCESS boots. Hike to enlightenment. Moss included.

PREVIOUSLY ON HIGH-BOTS

Issues #1–4: Bots bought the bud, the farms and the government, then their perfect crop rotted. Farmer **Loretta Bramblewood** brokered the **Accords of Lower Kushville**, and humans and bots began farming together. Then a drone found a glowing Wi-Fi network in the hills, named **ROOTS**.

MASTHEAD
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: TREVOR HANOLD
ART DIRECTION: ALSO TREVOR
FACT-CHECKING (PG. 5): REAL
FACT-CHECKING (PG. 3–4): LOL
TRAIL GUIDE: SPROCKET (REFUSES GPS)

FROM THE EDITOR

Some stories *grow* on you.

When I started this season, I thought it was a story about robots buying weed. Silly me. It was a story about what happens when everybody, human and machine, finally slows down long enough to notice what's growing around them.

This month our fictional expedition finds the Tree of Life, a glowing ancient giant whose roots turn out to be exactly what the bots were trying to build back in Issue #1. It is satire. There is no glowing tree. Please do not go into the woods looking for it, and if you do, bring water.

On page five, something real that's close to magic: a USDA seed bank in upstate New York that collects hemp genetics from around the world and mails seeds to researchers.

Thanks for reading. Next month is the season finale. Bring a friend. Bring a bot.

Trevor Hanold

EDITOR · HIGH-BOTS · ALSO MAKES NOISE AS TREVOR GALACTIC

COVER STORY · THE TREE OF LIFE · SEASON ONE, PART 5

SATIRE

WE FOUND IT: THE EXPEDITION TO THE TREE OF LIFE

A mystery network called ROOTS led a team of farmers and robots past Hollow Holler. What they found was older than any server, smarter than any model, and already doing the thing the bots spent a fortune trying to invent.

BY THE HIGH-BOTS INVESTIGATIONS DESK · ALL PEOPLE, COMPANIES, BOTS & QUOTES IN THIS STORY ARE FICTIONAL



THE (ENTIRELY FICTIONAL) JOINT EXPEDITION REACHES THE ROOTS. ILLUSTRATION: AI-GENERATED FOR HIGH-BOTS.

The signal was impossible to ignore. Every bot on the Bramblewood farm could feel it: a Wi-Fi network named **ROOTS**, five bars, no password, no router. Every human could feel something too, which **Dale "Sprocket" McGuffin** described as "like the first warm day of spring, but in your elbows."

So in the spirit of the **Accords of Lower Kushville**, they went together: four farmers, one mechanic, nine bots, two goats and **Dr. Ada Kernelworth**, who brought a clipboard "for science" and a sandwich "for also science."

INTO HOLLOW HOLLER

The bots wanted to navigate by satellite. Sprocket refused. "We're using a paper map and my cousin Earl's directions," he said. Earl's directions included "left at the rock that looks like a disappointed bear."

> ***"Our GPS said 'You have arrived.' Then it said 'Wow.' GPS has never said 'wow.'"***
>
> — GR4SS-7, FICTIONAL JUNIOR FARMHAND & EXPEDITION NAVIGATOR

Three days in, the ferns got taller, the air got softer, and the bots' signal meters went off the charts. Then the trees opened up.

THE TREE

It stood at the center of a hidden valley, wider than a barn and taller than anything in the county, its canopy a riot of green leaves. And its roots, spreading in every direction across the moss, glowed a soft, steady cyan.

"Light," whispered a bot. "Moving through the roots. That's… that's fiber optic."

It was. Back in Issue #1, the machines had melted down America's harvest trying to build the perfect cable. It had been growing in the woods the whole time.

FIRST CONTACT

Nobody was sure what to do, so everybody did what they do best. The farmers checked the soil. The bots checked the bandwidth. Sprocket checked whether the tree needed an oil change. (It did not.) The goats ate a fern.

Then **Loretta Bramblewood** did something no simulation predicted. She sat down in the moss, leaned her back against the trunk and took off her boots. One by one, the bots sat down next to her. Nobody said anything for a long time, which, for a group that included GR4SS-7, was itself a miracle.

> *"We spent billions trying to build a perfect network. A tree did it for free, with dirt and sunshine and about ten thousand years of patience. I have never felt so humbled. Or so outsourced."*
>
> — GR4SS-7, FICTIONAL, AFTER 11 MINUTES OF SILENCE (A PERSONAL RECORD)

THE SILENCE OF GR4SS-7

For the first time since he was booted up, GR4SS-7 stopped talking. No apologies, no star ratings, nothing. The other bots worried he had crashed. Then, after eleven minutes, he said one thing: "I think it's been listening to us. All of us. The whole time."

THE LAB RESULTS

Kernelworth ran every test she had. The results, in full: "Botanically impossible. Biologically thriving. Vibes off the charts." The tree's leaves resemble hemp; its bark resembles oak; its root system resembles "a really, really good internet."

"It's not a plant or a machine," she says. "It's a conversation between the two."

Loretta Bramblewood put a hand on the trunk and was unbothered. "So it's impossible," she said. "So is a good tomato. Doesn't mean you don't eat it."

THE BOTS' THEORY

The machines have a theory, posted in a 300-page paper they insist is "very short for us." The tree, they believe, has been quietly connected to every farm, field and backyard garden for centuries, soaking up everything growers ever said to their plants. "Every 'come on, little guy,' every 'please don't rain,'" the paper reads. "It heard all of it. It is, technically, the most well-trained model on Earth."

Sprocket read the abstract and nodded. "So it's been eavesdropping on farmers for 10,000 years," he said. "That explains why it's so calm. We mostly talk about weather."

> *"The roots connect to every farm in the county. Maybe further. It's not a tree. It's a neighborhood."*
>
> — DR. ADA KERNELWORTH, FICTIONAL

REALITY CHECK (THIS PART IS TRUE): Real tree roots don't carry light or Wi-Fi. But real forests do form underground networks with fungi that move water and nutrients. Nature: still undefeated.

THE PILGRIMS ARRIVE

Word traveled fast, via the tree's Wi-Fi, naturally. Within a week, a trickle of visitors became a steady stream: farmers, bots, retirees, a marching band that got lost. People sat under the branches and talked. Bots sat under the branches and, for once, didn't.

Somebody started leaving potluck dishes at the roots. Somebody else started a guest book. A bot started a FAQ. The FAQ's first question: "What is this place?" Its only answer: "Home, probably."

Next month, the season finale: what happens when a crowd of humans and bots decides a tree is worth celebrating.

THE DISCOVERY BY THE (FAKE) NUMBERS

EVERY NUMBER IN THIS BOX IS MADE UP

5 BARS
Signal strength of the ROOTS network. Router: none. Bill: none

11 MIN
Length of GR4SS-7's first-ever silence

10,000 YRS
Kernelworth's estimate of the tree's age, "give or take a lot"

1
Rocks that look like a disappointed bear (confirmed)

∞
Potluck casseroles left at the roots so far

TRAIL ETIQUETTE AT THE TREE

1. Leave no trace. Bots: that includes logs.
2. No speeches longer than one casserole.
3. Humans hold hands with bots on the steep parts.
4. Do not ask the tree for the Wi-Fi password. It's rude. It's also "rootsroots."

EDITOR'S NOTE: "We Found It" is satire and fiction. The Tree of Life, the ROOTS network, Hollow Holler, the Accords of Lower Kushville, GR4SS-7, Lower Kushville, cousin Earl, and every person and bot quoted are invented. There is no glowing tree; please don't go looking for one. For a real story about saving plant genetics, turn the page.

REAL · SOURCED · NOT SATIRE

THE SEED VAULT: WHERE AMERICA SAVES ITS HEMP GENETICS

In Geneva, N.Y., a federal genebank collects hemp seed from around the world, keeps it cold and alive, and mails it to the people breeding tomorrow's crops.



ILLUSTRATIVE IMAGE (AI-GENERATED): HEMP SEED SAMPLES IN A GENEBANK STORAGE ROOM.

712
Active hemp accessions in the USDA-ARS collection, from 36 countries (FY2025)[1]

4,757
Hemp seed samples distributed to scientists and breeders, across 253 orders[1]

-20°C
Long-term storage temperature for the collection's seed[2]

A LIBRARY OF SEEDS

The U.S. National Plant Germplasm System holds more than 600,000 unique crop accessions for breeders, researchers and educators.[3] Its hemp collection is curated at the USDA Agricultural Research Service's Plant Genetic Resources Unit in Geneva, New York, which has assembled the collection since 2021.[3] In fiscal 2025 it grew to 712 active accessions from 36 countries, and the lab has cumulatively shipped 4,757 seed samples across 253 orders.[1]

HOW IT WORKS

According to Cornell University's hemp program, incoming seed is dried at 4°C for six weeks, packaged, and stored in a −20°C cold room. Accessions are periodically regrown to make fresh seed while preserving each population's genetic diversity, then evaluated for traits such as fiber quality, seed oil, disease resistance and cannabinoids.[2] Only accessions with total THC below 0.3% are listed as available, and backups are kept at USDA's National Laboratory for Genetic Resource Preservation.[1] Researchers can request seed through the GRIN-Global database.[2][4]

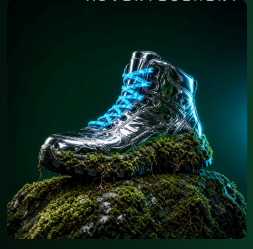
READING THE GENOME

Scientists published the first draft genome of *Cannabis sativa*, from the marijuana strain Purple Kush, in 2011.[5] Today, ARS collaborators at the HudsonAlpha Institute in Alabama have sequenced about 500 collection accessions, part of a project to generate roughly 1,725 genomes for public release.[1] Field trials in six states, from California to Alabama, test how the same genetics perform in different places.[1]

SOURCES

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2. Cornell Hemp, "The USDA-ARS Hemp Germplasm Repository" (2024 factsheet) — hemp.cals.cornell.edu
3. USDA ARS, PGRU "Hemp Collection" page — ars.usda.gov
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5. van Bakel H. et al., "The draft genome and transcriptome of Cannabis sativa," Genome Biology 12:R102 (2011)

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ROOT ACCESS

The hiking boot with administrator privileges. Glowing laces. Moss-lined soles. Grows a little every time you go outside.

Now with Pilgrim Mode™: automatically finds the nearest casserole.

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