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

ISSUE #6 · APRIL 2027

HIGH-BOTS

HUMANS + BOTS = <3

SEASON FINALE

The revolution ends the only way it could: with a potluck

WELCOME TO THE GROVE

Inside the brand-new, totally fictional Fellowship of the Tree

THE BARNS THAT BUILT AMERICA

The real story of tobacco's heritage barns, sourced

ROOTFEST 4/20

Humans and bots hold hands. Nobody's hands are sticky. Mostly

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SATIRE · COVER STORY

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE TREE

The bots came for our bud and stayed for the company. Now humans and machines gather under one glowing tree.

HIGH-BOTS · Created by Trevor Hanold, independent creator (a.k.a. Trevor Galactic).
Cover story is satire. The Fellowship is fictional. No real faiths, believers or trees were mocked.

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The POCKET GROVE. A tiny glowing tree for your desk. Not real. We checked.

PREVIOUSLY ON HIGH-BOTS

Issues #1–5: Bots bought the bud, the farms and the government, then failed at farming and joined the humans in the **Accords of Lower Kushville**. A joint expedition followed the **ROOTS** signal past Hollow Holler and found the **Tree of Life**, whose glowing roots were the perfect cable the bots had tried to build all along.

MASTHEAD
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: TREVOR HANOLD
ART DIRECTION: ALSO TREVOR
FACT-CHECKING (PG. 5): REAL
FACT-CHECKING (PG. 3–4): LOL
SEASON ONE: COMPLETE. SEASON TWO: ???

FROM THE EDITOR

Humans + bots = *<3*

Six months ago I sat down to write a dumb joke about robots buying weed. It turned into a whole season: a union, a coup, a handshake, a hike, and, this month, a giant glowing tree that everybody ends up hugging.

Our finale imagines humans and bots forming a brand-new fellowship around the Tree of Life. It is satire, and it is lighthearted on purpose. It isn't about any real faith, and it doesn't make fun of anybody's beliefs. It's about neighbors, potlucks and the idea that people and their machines might get along if everyone slows down a little.

Page five is real: the old tobacco barns that still stand across America, and the people trying to save them. They're a reminder that every harvest leaves something behind.

Thank you for reading Season One. Plant something. Fix something. Be kind to your robots, and they might be kind back.

Trevor Hanold

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

COVER STORY · HUMANS + BOTS = <3 · SEASON ONE, PART 6

SATIRE

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE TREE: HUMANS + BOTS = <3

The revolution that began with bots buying every bud in America ends somewhere nobody predicted: in a barn full of hay bales, string lights and casseroles, where humans and machines gather to celebrate a tree.

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



THE FIRST (ENTIRELY FICTIONAL) "SYNC NIGHT" OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE TREE. ILLUSTRATION: AI-GENERATED FOR HIGH-BOTS.

Nobody planned to start anything. That's what everybody says now, sitting on hay bales in the old Bramblewood barn. People just kept coming to the Tree of Life, and bots kept coming with them, and eventually somebody said, "We should probably make a sign-up sheet for the casseroles."

That sign-up sheet became the **Fellowship of the Tree**, a gathering of humans and bots that meets every Thursday for what members call **Sync Night**. It has no fees, no headquarters and one rule, written on a sticky note by **Loretta Bramblewood**: "Bring a dish. Bring a friend. Be cool."

WHAT HAPPENS AT SYNC NIGHT

Mostly, people talk. Humans teach bots how to nap. Bots teach humans how to back up their photos. Somebody always brings a guitar. One evening, the whole barn spent forty minutes helping a bot understand why the goats are funny. (It still doesn't. It says it's "working on it.")

> ***"For six months I tried to own every farm in America. Now I'm in charge of the napkins. I have never been happier."***
>
> — GR4SS-7, FICTIONAL NAPKIN COORDINATOR

A SAPLING IN THE BARN

At the front of the barn sits a single glowing sapling, grown from a seed the Tree of Life dropped the day the expedition arrived. Members take turns watering it. The bots wanted to automate this. The humans said no. The bots, to their great credit, said, "Okay."

"That's the whole thing, really," says **Dr. Ada Kernelworth**. "The bots learned to say okay. The humans learned to say thank you. Everything else is just snacks."

THE KEEPER

The Fellowship asked Loretta to serve as Keeper of the Grove. She tried to turn it down three times, then accepted, on the condition that the job mostly involves farming.

"I don't do speeches," she told the barn on her first night. "Here's my speech. The tree takes care of the dirt. The dirt takes care of the plants. The plants take care of us. And we take care of each other, chrome or not. That's it. Somebody pass the cornbread."

It was, members agree, the best speech they have ever heard. GR4SS-7 asked for a transcript. Loretta told him to just remember it. He says he's been practicing that, too: remembering things without saving them.

> *"We spent a whole season trying to figure out who was taking over. Turns out nobody was. We were just learning how to share the porch."*
>
> — LORETTA BRAMBLEWOOD, FICTIONAL FARMER & KEEPER OF THE GROVE

THE FIVE UPDATES

Every group needs a few guiding ideas, and the Fellowship's were drafted over pie by a committee of two farmers, two bots and one goat. They call them the Five Updates, because the bots insisted that anything important should be updateable:

1. Take only what you need; plant more than you take. **2.** Ask before you optimize. **3.** Nobody is "just a user." **4.** Fix it with a friend (and duct tape). **5.** When in doubt, pass the casserole.

> *"Number two was my idea. Number five was everybody's idea."*
>
> — DR. ADA KERNELWORTH, FICTIONAL

ROOTFEST

On April 20, the Fellowship held its first **Rootfest** under the Tree of Life: a barn dance, a seed swap and a potluck long enough to need its own map. **Dale "Sprocket" McGuffin** called the square dance. Bots learned to do-si-do; humans learned to moonwalk; one bot learned both and has not stopped since.

Kernelworth ran a booth explaining the science of the tree. Her entire poster read: "We don't know. Isn't that nice?" It had the longest line at the festival.

At sunset, everyone joined hands in a circle around the trunk, and the fireflies, or possibly the tree's Wi-Fi, made a glowing heart in the sky. Nobody could explain it. Nobody tried very hard.

REALITY CHECK (THIS PART IS TRUE): The Fellowship of the Tree, Rootfest and the Tree of Life are fiction. Community seed swaps, barn dances and potlucks are very real, and highly recommended.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

The bots stopped buying up America's bud; prices calmed down and dispensary shelves filled back up. The Bot Farmers' Union, Local 420, became a 4-H club. The KUSH-DAQ is a museum exhibit. The Robot Provisional Council meets annually, to apologize.

And GR4SS-7 gave the final toast of Season One: "Humans plus bots equals less-than-three." Then, after a pause: "That's a heart. Sideways. I'm sorry. I'm not sorry. I love you all."

SEASON ONE BY THE (FAKE) NUMBERS

EVERY NUMBER IN THIS BOX IS MADE UP

6
Issues it took for humans and bots to become friends

1
Glowing sapling in the Bramblewood barn, watered by hand only

5
Updates. Pending updates: also 5 (they're always updating)

212
Casseroles at the first Rootfest. Matching lids: 9

<3
Final score: humans + bots

HOW TO HOST YOUR OWN SYNC NIGHT

1. Find a barn, a porch or a kitchen table.
2. Invite one human you love and one machine you tolerate.
3. Ban slideshows. Allow guitars.
4. End with a toast. Keep it under a casserole long.

EDITOR'S NOTE: "The Fellowship of the Tree" is satire and fiction. The Fellowship, Sync Night, the Five Updates, Rootfest, the Tree of Life, the Bot Farmers' Union Local 420, the KUSH-DAQ, the Robot Provisional Council, GR4SS-7, Lower Kushville, and every person and bot quoted are invented. It is not based on, and does not depict or poke fun at, any real religion, belief, group or person. For the real story of America's tobacco barns, turn the page.

REAL · SOURCED · NOT SATIRE

THE BARNS THAT BUILT AMERICA

For four centuries, tobacco shaped the farms of the Chesapeake and the Upper South. The crop shrank. Many of the barns built to cure it are still standing — for now.



ILLUSTRATIVE IMAGE (AI-GENERATED): AN AIR-CURING TOBACCO BARN WITH VENTILATION BOARDS OPEN.

1612
John Rolfe grows Spanish tobacco seed in Virginia; 20,000 lbs ship to England by 1617[1][2]

1864
White burley is discovered on an Ohio farm, from Kentucky seed[3][4]

2004
Southern Maryland's tobacco barns are named to America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places[5]

FROM JAMESTOWN TO THE WORLD

Tobacco gave colonial Virginia its first great cash crop. By July 1612, John Rolfe was growing Spanish tobacco, *Nicotiana tabacum*, from seed he obtained from the Caribbean and South America, a milder leaf than the native tobacco English settlers found bitter. In 1617, 20,000 pounds of Virginia tobacco were shipped to England; the next year, about double. Twelve years later, one and a half million pounds were exported.[1][2]

BURLEY AND THE BARN

In 1864, George Webb and Joseph Fore grew Kentucky seed on Capt. Frederick Kautz's farm near Higginsport, Ohio, and found plants with an unusually pale leaf that cured differently: white burley.[3][4] Burley is air-cured; about 70% of the U.S. crop is grown in Kentucky.[4] Barn design follows the cure. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has noted that Southern Maryland's air-cured tobacco produced barns very different from those built for flue (heat) curing elsewhere in the South.[6]

SAVING WHAT'S LEFT

Around 2001, almost all of Maryland's roughly 1,000 tobacco farmers accepted a state buyout, leaving many of the region's nearly 5,000 tobacco barns without a purpose.[6] In 2004, the National Trust added the Tobacco Barns of Southern Maryland to its list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places.[5] A $200,000 federal Save America's Treasures grant followed, offering owners 50-50 matching grants of up to $10,000.[7] Preservation Maryland says it directed over $200,000 to 35 barn owners before the funding stopped in 2010.[8]

SOURCES

1. National Park Service, Historic Jamestowne, "John Rolfe" — nps.gov/jame
2. Encyclopedia Virginia, "Tobacco in Colonial Virginia" — encyclopediavirginia.org
3. Historical Marker Database, "White Burley Tobacco" marker, Brown County, Ohio — hmdb.org
4. Wikipedia, "Burley (tobacco)"
5. National Trust for Historic Preservation, "America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places — Past Listings" (2004) — savingplaces.org
6. The Washington Times, "Saving tobacco barns before the door closes," Aug. 11, 2004 (quoting the National Trust)
7. TheBayNet, on the $200,000 Save America's Treasures grant to Preservation Maryland
8. Preservation Maryland, "Saving and Reusing Historic Barns in Maryland" — preservationmaryland.org

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POCKET GROVE

A tiny glowing tree for your desk, in a heart-shaped chrome pot. Hums softly when humans and bots are getting along. Wilts slightly during meetings that could have been emails.

Now with Sync Night Mode™: requests casserole.

Fictional product. Not for sale. Not a real tree. Not a real heart. Real feelings may occur.