And now, boys and girls, a story about Missing Links in the Republican Party:

There came a time -- just once, so far -- when the Big Red Republican Bus made room for everyone inside, even the people usually considered too nasty or looney or strange to ride with all the nice people who rode the Big Red Bus for years and years and years.

These new-ish, and very different people, were called the BS-ers, which was short for the Bus-Stoppers and Bus-Toppers. These were nicknames for people who would try to stop the Big Red Bus as it sped down the highway, and try to make the driver at least let them ride up on top, outside, in the open air -- because they wanted to be part of the Big Red Bus Ride so very, very much.

The BS-ers came from all over. They believed in many odd and terrible things -- things that most people in the country didn't really believe, not deep down inside. The people inside the Big Red Bus sort of believed in these things, too, but it made them feel guilty and bad, because they knew it wasn't nice to believe in those BS-er things.

This is because the God blessing the Big Red Bus Fleet told them so. God's rules were really specific and clear. There was no getting around them. But, the Big Red Bus Riders really liked believing in their God, but they also really liked those BS-er things, too, deep down inside. The Riders told everyone -- even themselves! -- that they didn't really believe in them, just in the Fleet rules of their God.

It made them feel better that way, like having all their hate, but fearing it, too -- like *you* might like to have
your
cake and then eating it, too!

(It sometimes worked this way, where people believed one thing, but did the opposite thing, or looked away when someone did the opposite thing. No one really knows why this is so, but we've all noticed it happening for a really, really, really long time.)

Anyway: One day, a new driver started operating the Big Red Bus, His name was Robert Mercer. He was a rich hedge-fund hustler.

(A hedge fund was a kind of casino-bank, in lots of ways, which made Robert a really big banking-gambler-person. He usually took other people's money and cake to make more. Robert didn't really make or do anything tangible, that you could see happening, at work, but he made bets. Somehow, in the silly system humans made, these bets made him lots more money and cake -- a big-huge lot more than people who worked really hard all day. This may not be fair, but, remember, it's only a story, and could never happen in real life.)

So: Back to Robert. He wanted to drive the Big Red Bus because he really, really wanted to be the one to say where the Big Red Bus went.

This was because Robert wanted to save as much money as possible, by picking up people who could make him more money, or save him from paying more money himself. So, Robert hijacked part of the Big Red Bus Fleet for himself.

All the Big Red Bus Riders were fine with this new way of doing things -- even when the Big Red Bus starting stopping a lot more often, and picking up strange and hateful people along the side of the road.

These new people were BS-ers -- the ones who had the bad beliefs that the Big Red Bus Fleet's God didn't like, the ones who used to only ride up on top, if they rode at all.

The regular Big Red Bus Riders were a little uncomfortable, but went along with things, because the ride was a lot less expensive now, with Robert and the BS-ers paying the way. It felt like everyone got to win, now, with lots of cake-eating and cake-having, too!

Robert was so successful at being the Big Red Bus Driver, he branched out, and gave money and cake to people who ran the place that made all the stories that the BS-ers loved to read, or

have read to them. The BS-ers would then howl about these stories all day long with all the other BS-ers.

But, this was only the beginning! Robert started giving money and cake to people in places who made robots (some people called them politicians) in the basement, on their workbenches. Robert would give money and cake to anyone who would make him robots that would do what he wanted, which was saving him even more money and cake than he gave away in the first place!

It was a magical time in the country, for people like Robert, anyway, when money and cake flooded every street -- but Robert wanted even more than the mountains and mountains that he already had, and more than the mountains and mountains which fell from heaven every four years.

Robert would buy giant pieces of robot-politicians, trying to control what they would do. Robert wanted to be the only one with the remote control. Some of that was just because he could, and some of that was because he liked driving the Big Red Bus, and wanted to drive the robots, too.

Robert really wanted the whole country to be Red, without all the icky white and blue, because it would make things so much easier for him, and save him so much money and cake!

So, Robert started to buy the biggest pieces of the remote controls that he could, for robots which had good chances of driving the whole country and making it bright red!

But, Robert soon knew that he made a mistake, as he watched one of his popular robots, Teddy, lose a little race, then watched as one of his really popular robots, called Donnie, who was in The Big Race, start to lose there, too.

Both robots had bad brains, which didn;t work right, as it turned out. Both robots also believed , as it happened, coincidentally, in things that the God of the Big Red Bus Fleet's Riders weren't supposed to believe in, but did anyway.

Slowly, many of the Big Red Bus Riders understood what was happening, but it was mostly too late. Most of them tried to get off the Big Red Bus and get on the Big Blue Bus, or the Big White Bus, or the Big Striped Bus, or the Big Green Bus, or the Big Polka-Dotted Bus, or all the other Big Buses that were out there.

The country didn't turn Red, all the way, like Robert and the BS-ers wanted, but it was always pretty close. This is because there were so many BS-ers, and so much money and cake laying around, all the time, and so many free rides on the Big Red Bus.

Instead of what Robert wanted so badly, most of the country decided to ride on the Big Blue Bus. It wasn't perfect, but the Big Blue Bus wasn't on fire, it had all its wheels on, and it stayed on the road when it drove, instead of always pulling to the right, hard, and always winding up in the ditch, or the desert, or in the sticker-bushes.

It was not a happy time for Robert. The Big Red Bus Fleet wasn't in very good shape, either, but they had another four years to get things ready to roll again, for another Big Bus Race.

Heck, the Big Red Bus riders were already talking about the next one, even before this one even finished!

Robert? He spent the rest of his days trying out different buses and trying to make the perfect robot. He never found a bus he really liked, and he never made the perfect robot. The buses all had regular riders, and regular routes, and he couldn't stop for just anybody he wanted along the way. Plus, Robert could never buy enough of the remote control for the robots who worked really well.

It was also the case that whenever Robert tried to drive a bus, it would get flat tires or break down in the middle of nowhere, or it would run out of gas, or the engine would blow up. Sometimes, all the wheels would fall off, all at once. Other times, robots who failed would be thrown under the Big Red Bus, on purpose, then be used for spare parts, which usually got Robert in trouble.

But, we shouldn't feel too bad about Robert. He never ran out of money or cake -- just robots and buses. He went back to gambling, with other people's money and cake, and was happy all his days.

Some people said Robert's poor luck with buses and robots must be the God of the Big Red Bus Fleet getting back at him for being so greedy, but a lot more people said it was because they were just really tired of all the BS-ers -- especially after they all crowded into the Big Red Bus, took it over, and made all the regular Riders go ride up top, in the open air, in all the bad weather and bird poop.

So, the moral of the story of the Republican Party's Missing Link is: whichever Big Bus you ride in, don't take in so many BS-ers that they'll make you ride up on top.

Otherwise you won't be able to tell the driver where to go.

Not only that -- riding up on top, you'll be a rain-soaked, wind-blown old poopy-head, too.

Today's Bonus:

Rachel Maddow's version of the Missing Link story, and Robert's Big Red Bus:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zC12UnVj2Mk

Update on the Republican War on Bathrooms:

Owing to a judge's interim decision, people in North Carolina will be allowed to use restrooms corresponding to their gender IDs, not their birth IDs -- for a while, anyway. Look for more *Battles of the Bathroom*
next month, between and among lawmakers.
(Who knows? In some of those same states, we might even see some movement on that pesky bill that says women can vote, and everything!)