



# *How Googler and Gaggler, the Two Christmas Babies, Came Home with Monkey Wrenches*

Carl Sandburg  
North American

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Two babies came one night in snowstorm weather, came to a tar paper shack on a cinder patch next the railroad yards on the edge of the Village of Liver-and-Onions. The family doctor came that night, came with a bird of a spizz car throwing a big spot- light of a headlight through the snow of the snowstorm on the prairie. “Twins,” said the doctor. “Twins,” said e father and mother. And the wind as it shook the tar paper shack and shook the doors and the padlocks on the doors of the tar paper shack, the wind seemed to be howling softly, “Twins, twins.” Six days and Christmas Eve came. The mother of the twins lit two candles, two little two-for-a-nickel candles in each little window. And the mother handed the father the twins and said, “Here are your Christmas presents.” The father took the two baby boys and laughed, “Twice times twice is twice.” The two little two-for-a-nickel candles sputtered in each little window that Christmas Eve, and at last sputtered and went out, leaving the prairies dark and lonesome. The father and the mother of the twins sat by the window, each one holding a baby. Every once in a while they changed babies so as to hold a different twin. And every time they changed they laughed at each other, “Twice times twice is twice.”

One baby was called Googler, the other Gaggler. The two boys grew up, and hair came on their bald red heads. Their ears, wet behind, got dry. They learned how to pull on their stockings and shoes and tie their shoestrings. They learned at last how to take a handkerchief and hold it open and blow their noses. Their father looked at them growing up and said, "I think you'll make a couple of peanut-wagon men pouring hot butter into popcorn sacks." The family doctor saw the rashes and the itches and the measles and the whooping cough come along one year and another. He saw the husky Googler and the husky Gaggler throw off the rashes and the itches and the measles and the whooping cough. And the family doctor said, "They will go far and see much, and they will never be any good for sitting with the sitters and knitting with the knitters." Googler and Gaggler grew up and turned handsprings going to school in short pants, whistling with school books under their arms. They went barefooted and got stickers in their hair and teased cats and killed snakes and climbed apple trees and threw clubs up walnut trees and chewed slippery elli.

They stubbed their toes and cut their feet on broken bottles and went swimming in brickyard ponds and came home with their backs sunburnt so the skin peeled off. And before they went to bed every night they stood on their heads and turned flip-flops. One morning early in spring the young frogs were shooting silver spears of little new songs up into the sky. Strips of fresh young grass were beginning to flick the hills and spot the prairie with flicks and spots of new green. On that morning, Googler and Gaggler went to school with fun and danger and dreams in their eyes. They came home that day and told their mother, "There is a war between the pen wipers and the pencil sharpeners. Millions of pen wipers and millions of pencil sharpeners are marching against each other, marching and singing, Hay foot, strawfoot, bellyful o' bean soup. The pen wipers and the pencil sharpeners, millions and millions, are marching with drums, drumming, Ta rum, ta rum, ta rum turn turn. The pen wipers say, No matter how many million ink spots it costs and no matter how many million pencil sharpeners we kill, we are going to kill and kill till the last of the pencil sharpeners is killed. The pencil sharpeners say, No matter how many million shavings it costs, no matter how many million pen wipers we kill, we are going to kill and kill till the last of the pen wipers is killed."

The mother of Googler and Gaggler listened, her hands folded, her thumbs under her chin, her eyes watching the fun and the danger and the dreams in the eyes of the two boys. And she said, "Me, oh, my—but those pen wipers and pencil sharpeners hate each other." And she turned her eyes toward the flicks and spots of new green grass coming on the hills and the prairie, and she let her ears listen to the young frogs shooting silver

spears of little songs up into the sky that day. And she told her two boys, “Pick up your feet now and run. Go to the grass, go to the new green grass. Go to the young frogs and ask them why they are shooting songs up into the sky this early spring day. Pick up your feet now and run.”

At last Googler and Gaggler were big boys, big enough to pick the stickers out of each other’s hair, big enough to pick up their feet and run away from anybody who chased them. One night they turned flip-flops and handsprings and climbed up on top of a peanut wagon where a man was pouring hot butter into popcorn sacks. They went to sleep on top of the wagon. Googler dreamed of teasing cats, killing snakes, climbing apple trees and stealing apples. Gaggler dreamed of swimming in brickyard ponds and coming home with his back sunburnt so the skin peeled off.

They woke up with heavy gunnysacks in their arms. They climbed off the wagon and started home to their father and mother lugging the heavy gunnysacks on their backs. And they told their father and mother: “We ran away to the Thimble Country where the people wear thimble hats, where the women wash dishes in thimble dishpans, where the men go to work with thimble shovels. We saw a war, the left-handed people against the right-handed. And the smoke-stacks did all the fighting. They all had monkey wrenches and they tried to wrench each other to pieces. And they had monkey aces on the monkey wrenches—to scare each other. “All the time they were fighting the Thimble people sat looking on, the thimble women with thimble dishpans, the thimble men with thimble shovels. They waved hand-kerchiefs to each other, some left-hand handkerchiefs, and some right-hand handkerchiefs. They sat looking till the smokestacks with their monkey wrenches wrenched each other all to pieces.” Then Googler and Gaggler opened the heavy gunnysacks. “Here,” they said, “here is a left-handed monkey wrench, here is a right-handed monkey wrench. And here is a monkey wrench with a monkey face on the handle—to scare with.” Now the father and mother of Googler and Gaggler wonder how they will end up. The family doctor keeps on saying, “They will go far and see much but they will never sit with the sitters and knit with the knitters.” And sometimes when their father looks at them, he says what he said the Christmas Eve when the two-for-a-nickel candles stood two by two in the windows, “Twice times twice is twice.”

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