



It was easy to take apart, now if I can just remember how I did it...

Next Month

- ▶ Yamaha's new Ténéré vs. BMW's R1200GS on road and trail
- ▶ Waterproof Leather Gloves soaked
- ▶ HD Helmet Cams compared

Motorcycle

CONSUMER NEWS

42-11

PERIODICALS MAIL

General Tools' Lighted Pick-Up Tool

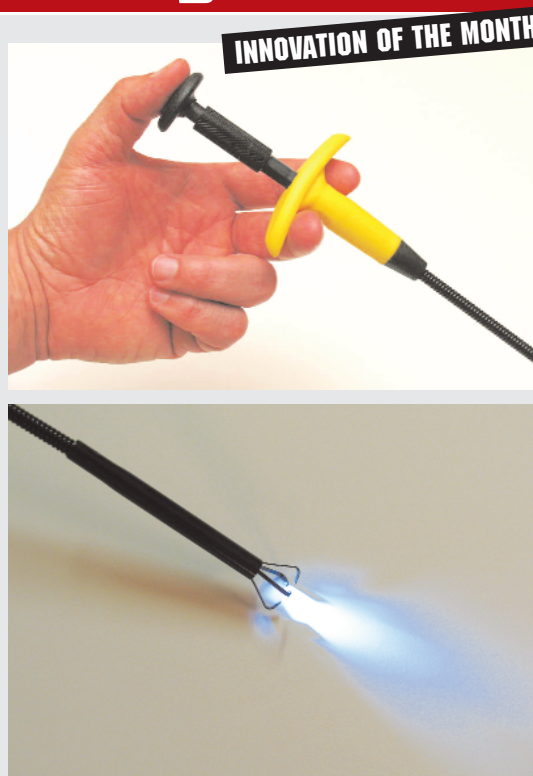
IT'S A WELL-DOCUMENTED phenomenon that, when fumbled, small parts find their way into the most inaccessible crevices available at the time. This is analogous to other presumably unlikely phenomena, such as the way a piece of buttered toast invariably lands face down on the floor if it can make its way off the edge of the breakfast table.

Sure, there are scientific explanations for such events, like the fact that the height of the average dining table simply isn't tall enough to allow for a full rotation of said toast, given the velocity of its descent. But what's the fun in knowing that?

No, life's far more interesting when we match wits with inanimate objects that are clearly determined to frustrate and bewilder us. Common sense says that no accidentally sprung circlip could possibly propel itself into a tiny recess that occupies some infinitesimally small percentage of the 3-dimensional space around it—a space barely larger than its own width—without deliberate malicious volition. These events just can't be the result of random chance; evil forces must be at work. If this is their game, fellow wrenchers, we must win!

While some might consider it noble to fight these battles bare-handed, we say there's no shame in evening the odds with a little technology. Those tiny parts aren't pulling any punches, so why should we? Therefore, we at MCN believe pick-up tools are an absolute must-have, and should be kept within easy reach of every workbench.

We all need at least a couple of these life-savers: one with a magnet on its tip,



and another with a grabby little claw contraption that opens and closes as we operate a plunger at the other end.

Now it's time to add a third, or perhaps replace the now obsolete claw-type currently in your arsenal.

The folks at General had the good sense to notice that the above-mentioned parts not only fall directly into inaccessible holes, they also fall into *black holes* whose gravitational attraction is obviously in inverse proportion to their size. So we can't even see them, much less reach them—it's enough to make even Steven Hawking scream *#&@!!

General's Lighted Mechanical Pick-Up incorporates a bright LED right in the center of its claw mechanism. Pushing the plunger down part-way turns the light on; pushing the plunger further operates the claw just like any other device of this sort. Pure genius!

The shaft is flexible to allow snaking past obstacles, the return spring (that actually provides the claw's grip strength) is powerful, and the ergonomics are thoughtfully designed. The entire piece has a very high-quality look and feel. Construction is almost entirely metal, except for the plastic parts your fingers touch. Three LR41 watch-type batteries are included; they fit into a tube that makes up part of the plunger. We got the mid-sized version, with a 24" reach, but 12" and 36" lengths are also available to suit your dilemma.

We didn't exactly have to pretend to lose something so we could try to use this beauty of a tool—fate quickly gave us a reason to be glad we'd picked one up. It worked quite well and left us smiling instead of cursing the escape of a tiny screw that had leapt into a black crack behind a heavy cabinet.

Our find was an accidental discovery at a big-box home improvement store, but they're also available online at General's website for \$11.96 (12" and 24") or \$12.96 (36"). We've apparently overlooked them for at least two years, as they won a *Popular Mechanics* magazine's Editor's Choice award back in 2009. Now that we know about them, we won't be without one again!

—Mark Barnes

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