

A Year Without "Made in China"

One family's true-life adventure
in the global economy

By Dianna Bai

Imagine a giddy toddler walking through a toy store with a handful of cash, only to discover he cannot buy a single thing. Such was the frustration Sara Bongiorni's four-year-old son endured as his family tried to go *A Year Without "Made in China"* (Wiley, US\$24.95).

Bongiorni, a seasoned journalist who specializes in international trade and business, decided in 2005 to find out just how much Americans were bound to the global economy. Her decree? To go a year without buying any products marked by the little sticker familiar to all US shoppers: "Made in China."

The experiment resulted in year of humorous shopping ordeals and mini-crises chronicled in Bongiorni's acclaimed book. She reluctantly shelled out a whopping US\$60 for children's shoes from Texas when her daughter outgrew her old ones. Her heartbroken son cried over the purple electric pumpkin he couldn't buy in the toy aisle because it was "Made in China." Instead, he was stuck with Danish Legos.

The family killed four mice with outdated snapping traps because the more humane

out smoothies because they couldn't find a replacement not "Made in China."

It was a yearlong lesson in globalization: China had become the patron goddess of American consumerism. Because of the huge labor pool and inexpensive production costs in the world's most populous nation, the American commodities industry has found itself largely unable to compete with Chinese factories. A US lamp manufacturer Bongiorni called told her that Chinese lamp makers were "eating the lunch" of American producers.

The fact that 15 percent of the \$1.7 trillion in goods imported to the US comes from here may incite some protectionist sentiments to "buy American." The Bongiorni's experience, however, illustrates just how difficult this task can be in an increasingly interconnected world.

"Americans may be famously patriotic, but look closely and you'll see who makes those flag magnets on their car bumpers," Bongiorni wrote in her newspaper column. "These days China delivers every major holiday, Fourth of July included."

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CNPIEC Bookstore's Recommendations

The China National Publication Import and Export Corporation's (CNPIEC) bookstore recommends the following US best sellers for Beijing Today readers.

Brilliant

By Marne Davis Kellogg,
352pp, St Martin's Paperbacks, 70 yuan



For the last 30 years, American Kick Keswick has devoted her life to a British institution. Following her boss's death, Kick continued to work and support the boss's son, Sir Benjamin. However, an upcoming merger with American industrialist Owen Brace depresses Sir Benjamin to the point of suicide.

Love Walked In

By Marisa de los Santos,
320pp, Plume, 140 yuan



Cornelia is manager of a cafe because she hasn't figured out anything better to do. Her ideal man is Cary Grant, who comes to her in the form of Martin Grace. What she doesn't know is that Grace, with his cool charm and debonair demeanor, has a daughter, Clare. Estranged from

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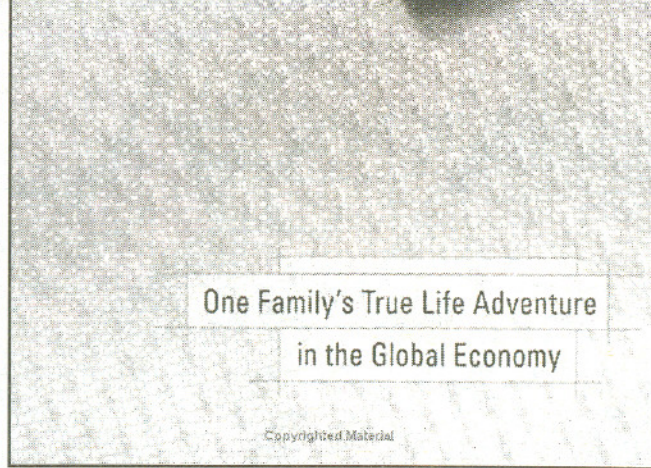
The family killed four mice with outdated snapping traps because the more humane catch-and-release ones were – you guessed it – "Made in China." And when the family blender sputtered out, they went a long, sweltering summer with-

lamp makers "eating the lunch" of American producers.

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Indeed, when the year without China was over, the author's four-year-old son rejoiced. He said to his mother one day in the bathtub: "When we can buy China things again, let's never stop."



"You will never go shopping the same way again! It's impossible to read Sara Bongiorno's book and not be captivated by the complexity and challenge of her task, and to then try it yourself for a day and fail miserably by lunchtime. This is the rare book that makes you think about how big global issues actually hit home, and it will have you discussing those issues with your friends."
 — Chuck Jaffe, Senior Columnist, MarketWatch host, Your Money

All down hill from here?



By Gan Tian
 Wu Hongfei, an experienced journalist of *Southern People Weekly*, asks some tough questions about today's world through her interviews with 32 famous figures in fields like literature, publishing, academia and directing.

Her book, *Zhege Shijie Haoxielema (Is the World Getting Better?)*, Wu Hongfei, Shanghai People's Publishing, 28 yuan), has telling interviews with popular Chinese celebrities: from controversial online figure Furong Jiejie (Lotus Sister) to host Huang Jianxiang, she asks each time whether the world is really getting better.

Wu interviews Dao Lang, an entertainer, crosstalk performer Guo Degang, fairy tale author Zheng Yuanjie, weiqi player Ma Xiaochun, script writer Ning Caishen, real estate king Pan Shiyi, writer Yu Hua and sexologist Li Yinhe.

In every interview, she appears sharp and aggressive, cutting to the

point directly. Though her behavior offends some of the stars, she is still able to dig out their "secrets."

Everyone focuses on Furong Jiejie's funny image in the media. No one cares about her traffic accident and its influence on her. Wu talked about it in her interview, sharing the tough times she went through and her weaknesses. The articles are much more attractive because they expose the weak points of the smiling faces plastered about the country.

But in the end, Wu's collection doesn't answer her initial question. The celebrities she interviews are important, powerful and famous enough. They represent the world. The rule seems to be that, if they live better, then the world must be getting better.

It takes some analysis on the part of the reader to answer the question. Sure, celebrities live better, but is the world improving? Can these people express what others want to express?

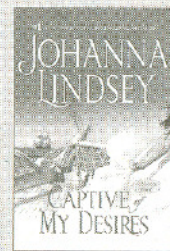
Wu's message rings clear in the end: the "elite" are ordinary people, and the world has nowhere to go but up. So the message is, embrace your averageness!

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Captive of My Desires
 By Johanna Lindsey,
 464pp, Pocket, 80 yuan



Laural Merlington engages the listener with this captivating story of a nineteenth-century pirate's daughter who falls in love with a sea captain. Gabrielle, daughter of a Caribbean pirate, returns to her native England to search for a husband. While under the protection of the Malory family, she falls in love with American sea captain Drew Anderson.

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 (By He Jianwei)