

Cinderella

(fall in love with your favorite fairy tale all over again)



Those step-sisters are so wicked!

The step-sisters have their go at the prince first.



Cinderella meets the handsome prince next.



They look pretty good together, don't they?



Happily ever after! What is it about this story that inspires so many? Perhaps it's the sympathy for the title character, the fantasia of the pumpkin carriage, the optimism of the Fairy Godmother, or, in this case, the breathtaking dance by the Moscow Festival Ballet. You've read it many times. **Now, witness CINDERELLA in its most magical and enchanting form, ballet.**

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Factory orders surge by 1.1 percent in December

By Jeannette Aversa
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — America's factories saw orders rebound in December, rising by a strong 1.1 percent, a fresh sign that the national economy's recovery was in full stride as it headed into the new year.

The over-the-month increase reported by the Commerce Department Wednesday came after orders placed with factories dropped by 0.9 percent in November. The latest snapshot of manufacturing activity was better than economists were expecting. They were forecasting a modest 0.3 percent rise in orders for December.

Much of the strength in December reflected stronger demand for "nondurable" goods.

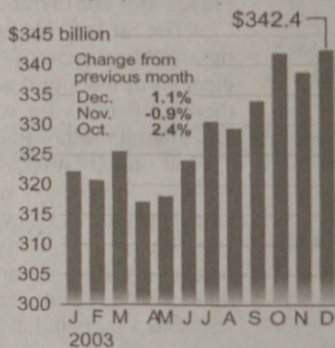
After keeping their inventories lean, "businesses are now having to restock everything from clothing and apparel to toothpaste, diapers and prescription and nonprescription medicines," said Mark Vitner, economist at Wachovia. That restocking, he said, bodes well for helping economic growth in the current quarter, which some analysts predict will exceed 4 percent annual rate.

For all of 2003, orders to U.S. factories rose by 3.9 percent.

On Wall Street, the news failed to impress investors. The Dow Jones industrials were off 10 points and the Nasdaq was

Factory orders

Here is a look at total new orders to American factories. Seasonally adjusted



SOURCE: Department of Commerce AP

down 30 points in trading around noon.

Wednesday's report, along with other recent economic data, suggest that the nation's manufacturing sector is gaining some ground.

A more forward-looking report released Monday by the Institute for Supply Management said that manufacturing activity was robust in January.

Job creation in the sector remains weak.

Factories have lost 2.8 million jobs since July 2000, the month manufacturing employment peaked in the last expansion. The nation's manufacturers were hardest hit by the 2001 recession and have struggled since then to get back on firm footing.

Recent economic data suggest that demand at home and abroad for U.S. manufactured goods is getting stronger.

A weaker dollar and stronger demand from other countries whose economies are improving, have been helping U.S. exports in recent months. A weaker dollar makes U.S. goods less expensive and thus more competitive on global markets.

The 1.1 percent increase overall factory orders in December was the largest since October, when orders were up by 2.4 percent.

Orders for "nondurable" goods rose by 2 percent in December, on top of a 0.8 percent increase in November. Orders placed with factories for food, clothing, leather goods, petroleum and plastics products, and plastics products all showed gains.

Orders for "durable" goods rose by 0.3 percent in December, an improvement from November's 2.4 percent decline. Stronger demand for machinery and electrical equipment were among the categories posting an increase in orders while orders for cars and furniture were among categories in which orders declined.

Excluding transportation equipment, all other orders in factories rose by 0.9 percent in December, a turnaround from the 1.1 percent drop seen in November.

NASA works on Spirit's memory, plans new Opportunity road trip

By Andrew Bridges
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PASADENA, Calif. — NASA awakened its Mars rover Spirit early Wednesday and started the delicate process of cleaning old files out of its memory to cure it of the problems that have delayed its search for signs that the planet was once a wetter place.

The process did not begin until after four days of tests.

"It's not an operation that we do lightly," Mark Adler, a deputy mission manager, said at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

The six-wheeled vehicle was ordered to conserve power before being awakened. Two hours later it began the four-hour process of reformatting its flash memory, which involves erasing all the contents.

Scientists believe a buildup of too many files in the flash memory caused the rover to stop transmitting data back to Earth beginning Jan. 21. Spirit briefly resumed science operations earlier this week before NASA once again halted the work to finish correcting the memory problem.

The rover was expected to resume normal operations late Wednesday.

On the other side of Mars, the twin rover Opportunity was readied for a little road trip. Its destination was a rock formation where instruments suggest there are higher concentrations of hematite — a mineral that can form in water — than had been found at its current site.

Geologic evidence of water would support the possibility that Mars once had life. The rovers

NASA follows clues in telltale mineral

NASA's Mars rover Opportunity landed in the Meridiani Planum, an area shown to be rich in gray hematite, a type of iron oxide mineral. Gray hematite can be produced under watery conditions hospitable to life. Scientists hope to determine which type of hematite-forming environment existed at Meridiani.



SOURCES: NASA, Associated Press

have found intriguing geological data, but scientists remained cautious.

"With respect to extrapolating from a few grains of sand to a story about water on Mars — little hard to do at this point," said Steven Squyres, the mission's principal scientist.

Spirit landed on Mars on Jan. 3, followed three weeks later by Opportunity.

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