



## The Emperor of Shoes

*Spencer Wise*

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**“Evocative... *The Emperor of Shoes* underscores the extent to which the promise of economic opportunity still moves people across great distances on our planet...[A novel] of our times...”**— *New York Times Book Review*

**\*A Library Journal Best Debut of Summer 2018\***

**From an exciting new voice in literary fiction, a transfixing story about an expatriate in southern China and his burgeoning relationship with a seamstress intent on inspiring dramatic political change**

Alex Cohen, a twenty-six-year-old Jewish Bostonian, is living in southern China, where his father runs their family-owned shoe factory. Alex reluctantly assumes the helm of the company, but as he explores the plant's vast floors and assembly lines, he comes to a grim realization: employees are exploited, regulatory systems are corrupt and Alex's own father is engaging in bribes to protect the bottom line.

When Alex meets a seamstress named Ivy, his sympathies begin to shift. She is an embedded organizer of a pro-democratic Chinese party, secretly sowing dissonance among her fellow laborers. Will Alex remain loyal to his father and his heritage? Or will the sparks of revolution ignite?

Deftly plotted and vibrantly drawn, *The Emperor of Shoes* is a timely meditation on idealism, ambition, father-son rivalry and cultural revolution, set against a vivid backdrop of social and technological change.

## The Emperor of Shoes Details

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Author : Spencer Wise

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## From Reader Review The Emperor of Shoes for online ebook

### Cathy says

In his praise for The Emperor of Shoes, Robert Olen Butler describes the book as ‘character-rich’ and I can’t disagree. That doesn’t mean, however, that the characters are necessarily easy to like.

I found myself constantly shifting my view of Alex’s father, Fedor, accorded the accolade the ‘Emperor of Shoes’ (as he proudly reminds people). One minute I felt he was merely an ambitious father trying his best to preserve the family business for his son in the face of changing market forces; the next minute, I was feeling reluctant sympathy for a pathetic, hypochondriac desperate for his son’s attention; the next minute, I was repelled by a monstrous figure up to his eyes in corruption with little or no regard for the lives of his workers.

Similarly, I started out condemning Alex for his naivety about working conditions in the factory. How could he not have known what was going on? Was he stupid, deliberately turning a blind eye because he couldn’t face up to the truth, or fearful of challenging his father? However, the author skilfully takes the reader inside the mind of Alex, sharing his struggles with the difficult moral choices he faces and slowly gaining this reader’s sympathy.

Inspired by Ivy, the Chinese woman and activist with whom he forms a relationship, Alex begins to imagine making a difference to the lives of the workers in his factory. But he faces opposition from the local state institutions built on bribes (euphemistically referred to as ‘gifts’) and corruption, personified by the malign and creepy Gang, described as ‘a Brooklyn mob boss in Mao jacket and togs’ who can make people ‘disappear with a nod of the head.’ A business proposition from Alex’s old friend, Bernie, offers the possibility of a third way but will mean taking a strikingly different path from the way his father has run the business up until now. Does Alex have what it takes to face down ‘The Emperor of Shoes’ and start a quiet revolution? And, if he does, will it take a greater sacrifice than he can bear?

The Emperor of Shoes made me think – and I always like that in a book. For example, it made me question if, with a clear conscience, I could ever buy shoes made in China again without assuring myself of the working conditions in the factory. ‘The elevator opened onto a room the size of an airplane hanger, and the dank warm air from the heat setter boxes slipped over my face like a pillow. A boy with a Mohawk scowled at me: a stump for a right arm, severed at the elbow by the steel embossing plate on the leather grain press. A girl, eyes jaundiced, punch-drunk, the first flush of benzene poisoning from cement glue vapors, scratched at her arm. Everywhere, people and machines.’ A far cry from the conditions in Alex’s upmarket hotel.

The book also explores in an interesting way questions of identity. An American by birth, Alex is nevertheless keenly aware of his Jewish and Russian heritage. At one point, he is asked by Zhang, leader of the activist movement: “Russian, Jewish, American. How can you be all? Or do you pick one?”

There is real energy in the writing, along with acute observation and dark humour – for example, when Alex returns to his luxurious, air-conditioned hotel suite after a day at the factory (while the workers return to their dormitories subject to a curfew). ‘There was a silver tray on my desk with a bottle of wine, a long stem rose in a champagne flute, a box of Godiva chocolates. Even the gifts were a kind of mockery: here, enjoy a long sensual evening by yourself. These came courtesy of the hotel, once a week, for Ambassador level guests. You reached Ambassador when you’d spent a good three quarters of your life on the road sleeping in their hotels. It got passed down too, an inheritance you didn’t earn. Death by luxury.’

The Emperor of Shoes is an impressive debut – compelling, thought-provoking and spirited. I, for one, can't wait to read what the author creates next.

I received a review copy courtesy of publishers, No Exit Press, and Random Things Tours in return for an honest and unbiased review.

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### **Mairead Hearne ([swirlandthread.com](http://swirlandthread.com)) says**

*'This world is opening. Has opened. It's a different world, the one I'm going to be living in, and I don't understand my place in it.'*

**The Emperor of Shoes** is the debut novel by American writer Spencer Wise. Published on 26th July by No Exit Press, it has been described as '*ambitious, tightly plotted, profoundly humane and full of Yiddish humour...a sublime debut*'.

This is a novel I expect will fall into the genre of Literary Fiction, dealing with the impact of the social and technological revolution on a Jewish family shoe empire, as a father and son both face up to the very complex challenges presented to them in modern day China.

**The Emperor of Shoes** is a novel that I knew from the outset was going to be a very quirky and unusual read for me. Spencer Wise has incorporated his own personal family history into his story, coming from a lineage of shoemakers dating back to the early shtetls in Poland. The novel is set in modern day China and gives the reader an insight into the difficulties and hardship of the working environment that exists in the shoe factories there. Alex Cohen, the main protagonist, joins his father in Guangdong, where it is the intention that he assume control over the manufacturing of their shoes. His father, a very overbearing figure, has successfully run his shoe empire for many years, but according to the old ways. The workers are oft treated very inhumanely, with Alex's father choosing to ignore the conditions of his workforce once the endline is achieved and his profits remain high.

Alex is very taken aback by the exploitation of the workforce and the harshness of the environment. The pay is low, the work is soul-destroying and the staff are like caged animals within an extremely tough climate. Alex witnesses the corruption and is shocked by his father's acceptance of this method of doing business. His father adopts very old workplace traditions but Alex is looking to make changes. There is the inevitable clash of two very different generations with extremely different ideas on how the factory should operate.

Spencer Wise took his research one step further by installing himself in the dormitory of a shoe factory in China so that he could get a full understanding of life there. This gave him a very hands-on understanding of the environment that he would be writing about in his novel, and with his family history in the business, the reader is given a wholly authentic experience.

As Alex sees first-hand the harshness of the workplace, he also meets Ivy. Ivy is older than Alex, yet she embodies perfection for Alex and he becomes enthralled with her, looking to spend as much time in her company as is possible. But Ivy is the antithesis of everything Alex and his father represent. She witnessed the horrors of Tiananmen Square and is now a political activist, with extreme views on the working conditions of the Chinese labour force. She abhors all that Alex's family business represents, as can be seen in this small extract from a conversation they have...

*“Eucalyptus? Yes. From Australia. Our government plants them everywhere. They grow fast and tall, but they drink all the nutrition in the soil and kill off other plants. Very bad. In English I think you call it invader species. I don’t know. Someone makes a lot of money off them.” I felt she was talking about me. I know she was..’*

Alex gets caught up between his loyalty to his father and his growing love for Ivy and all that she represents. The old versus the new. With so many changes in society, Alex’s father is overwhelmed and feels threatened as he fears for the future of his empire and his position in this new world.

**The Emperor of Shoes** is almost an epic novel in a way I find quite difficult to articulate. While it was a little difficult to feel a strong connection with any of the characters, I feel this was more to do with my own lack of knowledge of a people, a society and of course of shoe manufacturing. I was really disturbed in reading about some of the horrendous treatment that was inflicted on the workers but at the same time I was also fascinated reading about the Chinese culture with their superstitions and beliefs.

**The Emperor of Shoes** is a beautiful story, a novel about love, acceptance and change. It is a story about the clashing world of the old traditional methods and the new technological and social changes that are inevitable in all societies today. Ultimately it is the story of a father and son as they struggle to maintain a relationship in an ever changing environment where two venerable and ancient heritages, Chinese and Judaism, come face-to-face with the modern world.

**Fascinating. Insightful. Challenging.**

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**SueKich says**

**“Only the wearer knows if the shoe fits.”**

President Xi Jinping

One of the most marvellous things about reading is that one can be transported to another world. Here, the reader is virtually transported to two. The eponymous ‘Emperor of Shoes’ is an aging Jewish Bostonian and part-owner of a shoe factory in Guangdong, Southern China. His 26-year old son Alex, the narrator, is being groomed to follow in his formidable father’s footsteps. Unusually and without recourse to flashbacks, Spencer Wise interweaves the historical Jewish threads of his story with the current communist/capitalist dichotomy of modern China. This is handled with tremendous tenderness, subtlety and insight. But also with grit.

Alex has fallen hook, line and sinker for a Chinese woman who works in the factory. Ivy is different to most of the other workers, she’s fluent in English for one thing. She’s also committed to an underground revolutionary group fighting for fairer work practices in China. Alex - so used to pleasing his arch-capitalist father - now finds himself swayed by the influence of his socialist squeeze. With his conscience sorely tested, the Jewish guilt bubbles up nicely. But things are about to get really complicated for Alex when the corruption inherent in the Chinese system of doing business comes into play.

Turning a two-dimensional design of a shoe into a three-dimensional object to wrap around something as complex as the human foot is a complicated process requiring a great many stages of development. Likewise, turning a callow young man into a mature thinking adult requires several degrees of nuanced fine tuning on the part of the author. Spencer Wise achieves this growth of character with conviction, empathy and humour.

A terrific debut and an interesting new voice. Warmly recommended.

My thanks to No Exit Press for the ARC via NetGalley.

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### **Ran says**

Someone recommended this novel in passing to me, giving me the false impression that it was a work of nonfiction. Turns out, it's fiction (no surprise here now) but the suggester had conflated the work with its "local author" significance. Either way, the story grated on me pretty much the whole way through, with the exceptional mention of Kelly's Roast Beef in Revere.

Boston native Alex Cohen is expected to take over his father's shoe factory in southern China. However, Alex has been spending time with factory girl (yet college-educated activist) Ivy, who has been putting ideas of better working conditions into his ear, much to the chagrin of his stereotyped business-minded father and the party leader who wants to see a continuing 8% increase each year in his city's regional business. Alex spends time reconciling his history as a Jewish individual (and his experience as a descendant of those who experienced or fled Europe during the second World War) with his need to fulfill his father's legacy.

Here's why the book doesn't work so well: a) the timeline is a little askew by the dates and supposed ages and perceptions, b) understanding Chinese business practices isn't fleshed out well (also the fact that the narrator doesn't know the concept of hukou system from the start is unbelievable), and c) the "resolution" is internal rather than external ... which can be a disappointing read.

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### **Eva says**

How often do we buy something that says Made in China? When we do, do we stop and wonder about the conditions of the people who made this pair of jeans, this phone in our hand or the shoes on our feet?

At twenty-six years of age, Alex Cohen hasn't really been questioning these things either, despite the fact his father owns a shoe factory in China. It isn't until Alex meets Ivy, a seamstress at the factory, that his sympathies begin to shift.

This novel is mainly centred around the relationship between Alex and his father. Alex is fiercely loyal and while he feels changes need to be made somehow, he's wary of going against everything his father stands for. All he really wants is to make him happy and proud. But Fedor Cohen isn't a particularly likeable character most of the time. He doesn't care one iota for his workers, the conditions they work and live in and would like nothing more than to see his son follow in his footsteps. Yet, despite their relationship being quite complicated, it's also rather wonderful. There's mutual respect and also a lovely dose of humour.

And then there's Alex's relationship with Ivy. Ivy was present at the historical and unforgettable student protests at Tiananmen Square in 1989 and despite the devastating consequences, her desire for a democratic

and better China hasn't waned. Is she using Alex to push through changes, though?

I must admit I struggled with this novel a little bit at the start and wondered if literary fiction was perhaps a step too far for me. But at some point, things just clicked and I became quite engrossed. This is an incredibly thought-provoking novel that gives immense insight into the social issues that plague China and its population. The injustice and the corruption is really laid bare. But it's not all doom and gloom as there are some quite funny moments too. Chinese proverbs do not translate well to English, for one, and there's also an older factory worker who apparently learned the little knowledge of English she has through movies.

With wonderfully vivid descriptions of China and an eye-opening topic, this beautifully written and realistic novel about change in every shape or form is a powerful debut by Spencer Wise and I'm glad, that despite the initial struggle, I persevered.

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### **Thebooktrail says**

Three words for now:

Insightful, thought-provoking and evocative

FULL REVIEW:

BookTrail the locations in the novel

What a fascinatingly complex novel. I admit to not being able to write this review straight after the book which is often what I try to do. There were so many questions in my head after I'd finished it. Even now I think it's going to stay with me and grow even more, such is the sharpness and insight in this novel.

It's quite remarkable to get this much symbolism, imagery, awareness, social commenter and a true sense of the human spirit in a debut novel. It's very powerful and I had to read it slow to take it all in.

Words hit you in this novel, a novel about the changing China, new and emerging business practises, the journey from the old ways to the new, from the, in some cases, illegal practices to the freedom of having a conscience.

Ivy and Alex are two of the strongest and most symbolic characters I've read about in a long while and I feel this could be even more powerful than any history book. Gritty and raw. But oh so powerful.

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### **Creager says**

In the Emperor of Shoes, Spencer Wise, dares to ask for a little more buck for the bang. 26 year old, Jewish expatriate Alex has a lover and is being groomed to take over his father's shoe factory in China. Shouldn't that be enough? Amidst the fine line of a woman's instep, his living father as the voice in his head (oh vey), and the bribing of officials, Alex awakens to the subjugation of a people in its totality.

Snippets:

The father/son relationship is alive/patronising...real

Ivy, as far as I'm concerned manipulated/used/took advantage him, and I'm okay with it.

Die Jo was the bees knees

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### **Linda says**

Last words.....

Dad said, "On his deathbed, Rabbi Akiba told his son, 'Wear a decent pair of shoes.' Those were his last words."

And in keeping shoes worthy of Rabbi Akiba, Alex Cohen, via Boston to southern China, assists his father in a family-owned shoe factory in Guandong. Being Jewish and living in China doesn't necessarily make you a citizen of the world. According to Alex, being Jewish, alone, always makes you an outsider.

Alex embraces his newly acquired life with a bit of intrepidation. But Alex embraces Ivy far more. Ivy's given name is Hanjia Liu. She works as a stitcher in the sample room of the factory. Ivy's talents are multi-faceted as she is a former organizer at Tiananmen and secretly delivers pamphlets for organizing a workers' union. Ivy lives up to her newly dubbed name as she weaves cautiously in and out of the dark corners in order to bring the light of a pro-democratic Chinese party. It is Ivy who opens the dulled eyes of Alex to what is really going on in his father's factory.

With the winds of revolutionary ideas swirling around him, Alex realizes that something is amiss in his father's usual day-to-day operations. He is repeatedly stepping back and allowing Alex more say in the company without Alex being properly groomed for the responsibilities. Money seems to pass readily from hand to hand. It is these transactions that prompt Alex into pulling back the silken curtains.

Spencer Wise creates a beautifully crafted novel with fine-tuned main characters surrounded in the upheavals of social and technological change. The old ways no longer benefit neither the citizen nor the craftsmanship of the present day worker. Revolutionary ideals may even wedge their way between personal relationships including father and son. The answers we seek may not be the answers we welcome. Deftly written, *The Emperor of Shoes* is one to watch.

I received a copy of *The Emperor of Shoes* through Goodreads Giveaways. My thanks to Hanover Square Press and to Spencer Wise for the opportunity.

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### **Marialyce says**

My reviews can be found here: <https://yayareadslotsofbooks.wordpress...>

Life always seems to be in a state of flux. As we grow, we develop relationships, some of them tenuous which have a pull and tug connection between our selves and our world in which we live.

Alex Cohen is a young Jewish man living in Southern China. He and his father own a shoe factory and have a relationship that can be considered at times contentious. Alex's dad is the boss. His word is law and though at times his words to Alex are funny, they often hurt. Alex is in a relationship with a Chinese revolutionary, a young girl who works in the factory. She and others are looking to change China. They want a more democratic form of leadership and as Alex assumes and becomes the head of the company, he sees how the workers are being exploited.

Alex loves his father and yet when he sees the climate the workers are forced to be in, and their plight, it sets him on a collision course against the father who has always been his rock. Alex runs up against the idealism of what he wants to see happening and the love of a father and the heritage he carries. He also finds himself in a dangerous situation with the powers that be.

Alex's father is ambitious, wanting success to be theirs, always striving for more, often disregarding how one does acquire that more. China is portrayed, twenty five years after Tiananmen Square, as being a place ripe for democracy yet controlled by a few who would use any means to keep their position. It is a place ripe for change and as Alex himself feels change coming, he witnesses not only a country, a people wanting to so embrace human rights and needs, but he himself grabbing onto change within the person he strives to be.

Beautifully written, this story unfolds among a world that is changing too fast for some. Can Alex find that freedom he longs for, freedom from his father, freedom from heritage, and freedom that will not shatter everything? Can he save the relationship he has had with his father and with the young Chinese revolutionary, Ivy? "Relationships are like glass. Sometimes it's better to leave them broken than try to hurt yourself putting it back together." Can China also find their way in recognizing the human in every person who lives and works within their massive country?

Thank you to Spencer Wise, Hanover Publishing, and Edelweiss for an advanced copy of this book. It was quite an interesting look into a world where freedom is not really free.

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### **Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says**

#### **5 exciting stars to The Emperor of Shoes! ? ? ? ?**

The Emperor of Shoes is an unexpectedly delicious read. Alex Cohen is a twenty-six-year-old Jewish expatriate living in southern China. He is needed there to run his family's shoe factory.

Alex is reluctant in taking this role, and once he does, as he travels the floors of the business, he is shocked by the exploitation and corruption he witnesses therein.

Alex then meets Ivy, a seamstress in his factory, who is secretly a political organizer, threatening to pull the rug out from under his family's business if she can get all the laborers on the same page.

I absolutely loved Emperor of Shoes. It's a cross-cultural story with emotionally and politically charged issues, along with the threat of vast systems' changes as society, technology, and social mores evolve. I enjoyed observing the dynamic between Alex and his father, and also the changes within Alex, as he figures out his own ethics; a coming of age for him, really.

Overall, Emperor of Shoes is an original story about change on different levels and how explosive it can be to relationships.

Thank you to Spencer Wise, Hanover Square Press, and Edelweiss for the ARC. Emperor of Shoes is now available!

My reviews can also be found on my blog: [www.jennifertarheelreader.com](http://www.jennifertarheelreader.com)

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### **MRIDULA says**

Dream big is something we all have been advised at least once in life. But a tine idea, a small change is also capable of bringing a change in our lives as well as others. The Emperor of Shoes is one such tale. Alex, the son, and inheritor of an established shoemaking company in China is yet to find his purpose. His life takes a toll when he joins the company and discovers the ways his father has been running the company, mainly the underlying bribery and exploitation.

Alex meets a girl whose revolutionary ideologies affect Alex the most. Alex is in love with her and while she has been trying to make the lives of the workers in the factory better, she wants his support. Among all the turmoil, Alex needs to pick a side- his father's or the workers.

The Emperor of Shoes is mainly about exploitation and the injustice factory workers face in China, while the rich get richer. Alex is the poster boy of the plot, a confused person, without direction or guidance, just expected to take the company to great heights. His mental state has been beautifully described by the author and anyone who doesn't know what they want from life can easily empathize with him. He wants to do good, but the path is full of risks that can be deadly, literally.

While I found the writing style a bit simple as compared to other literary fictions, the story doesn't get boring. There are mentions of great revolutionary leaders and the ways people can bring change. The characters are very different from each other, the demarcation maintained throughout. Emotions play an important part in the story as we need to feel the pain in order to know it. There are lighter moments too which makes it easier to follow the plot. The ending has been kept realistic without any over the top drama/climax.

**“The Emperor of Shoes is subtle yet thought-provoking take on revolutionary ideas, with a protagonist who is yet to find his ideal niche, and is as vulnerable as any other human.”**

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### **Angela M says**

“It’s a bright moon outside, and from the window of my house I can see the skeletal gray of the factory, the banners draped like sashes and the deep arterial red of Mandarin characters demanding change, and I’m wondering how the fuck this Jewish kid from Boston could somehow wind up a YouTube hero in the Chinese Revolution.”

That wonderfully written and thought provoking beginning paragraph certainly drew me in and I wanted to

know. It's 2015 in South China and Alex Cohen at 26 years old ends up at a crossroads in his life when his father, the owner of a shoe factory wants to pass the responsibility of running the business over to him - or does he? The senior Mr. Cohen wants to hand over the reigns, expecting that Alex will continue with the practices he engages in paying off corrupt locals, maintaining the horrible working conditions and exploitation of the workers. A horrible event happens at the factory and it truly becomes a time of reckoning for Alex with choices to make. At the same time, he encounters Ivy, an activist implanted as a factory worker with the desire to organize in hopes of improving things for the workers. She's brave and cares for the people of her country, carrying a burden of loss for what happened at Tiannamen Square years before. In some way she remained an enigma to me until the end.

We get glimpses of Alex's relationship with his father and his Jewish upbringing. Alex's reflections on growing up Jewish and sometimes relating those beliefs or rituals to the importance of Chinese traditions and what is happening to the Chinese workers was quite poignant. "I wanted to say to him.....We've been persecuted and poor, and now you've just turned around and done it to other people. Exploiting, abusing - how do you call yourself Jewish." I won't tell further of the story, but will just say that this was a worthwhile, moving story and it's clear from these recent articles that the situations described here are real.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018...>

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/article...>

<https://www.theepochtimes.com/working...>

I received an advanced copy of this book from Hanover Square through NetGalley and Edelweiss.

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### **Susan Hampson says**

I don't really suppose that Alex Cohen had given much thought to how the family wealth had been acquired. I don't suppose you would when you are the third generation in the family shoe business. I am not talking a little high street shop here, I am talking about the production side, the factories that make the shoes for major shoe retailers. So Alex had quite a task on his shoulders because he really wanted his father to be proud of him or at least he did until he saw the real cost of making the shoes.

This is one mighty powerful story where I had to keep turning back the pages to make sure I had got the time period right and that it was taking place in present day. Alex was to learn the family trade which was based in China. Oh my I could have wept as Alex took a tour of the start to finish shoe production line, from carcass to high-class shoe, that had made his family name and fortune in China. When Ivy caught his eye, a young Chinese girl making the shoes, his life took on a new direction.

Oh my this story really opened my eyes to world trade and how the system can be abused. This is a very powerful story with strong characters that are willing to lay down their lives to change conditions for the better. There are the odd wolves in amongst the people who are there for all the wrong reasons. Greed and exploitation comes in many disguises from people who have little regard for life to people much closer to home where they only see the bottom line.

Alex was a changed man by the end of the story. A much wiser man than the gullible one straight from college. An absolutely riveting read.

I wish to thank NetGalley and the publisher for an e-copy of this book which I have reviewed honestly.

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## Faith says

Despite his lack of experience, Alex Cohen's father Fedor makes him a partner in the shoe business Fedor has built in China. Alex, who is 26 in 2015, is falling in love with Ivy, a 36 year old stitcher in the shoe factory. Ivy, whose sister was killed in Tiananmen Square, is secretly part of a revolutionary group that wants to increase the rights of Chinese workers.

I'm afraid that this book was just ok for me. There were some interesting descriptions of life in China, but one of my problems with the book was that I didn't like Alex. He was too passive and easily manipulated by both his father and Ivy. He wanted to be out from under the thumb of his father, but never considered maybe getting a job someplace else rather than just being handed a business. While my favorite part of the book was the father/son conflict, I was rooting for Fedor, who had built a business only to see it threatened by Chinese politics, changing shoe trends, worker revolt and his own son. The author however is rooting for Alex. I was less interested in the story of the workers. Perhaps because it wasn't told from their point of view, and Ivy seemed more stereotype than real woman. I might read more by this author if I came across it, but I wouldn't actively seek it out.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher.

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## Fran says

Guangdong, South China 2015. Fedor Cohen is the primary owner of The Tiger Shoe Factory. The factory consists of an administration building, two production plants and two dormitories. Fedor, a Jewish Bostonian, runs his business with precision and order, resisting change. Alex Cohen, Fedor's twenty-six year old son, is being groomed to take over the family business. A father-son conflict of ideas is on the horizon.

Upon scrutiny, Alex realizes that maintaining the bottom line and increasing productivity comes at a cost. In addition, he can compare and contrast the lifestyle he and Fedor experience living in the Intercontinental Hotel with the dormitory living of migrant workers. The workers wait in long lines to shower. Hot water is available only at 8 AM or 8 PM. Cohen, the elder, tells Alex that he has poured his life's blood into the factory for the sake of the family. A hefty dose of Jewish guilt!

Enlightenment comes slowly to Alex through his association with Ivy, a stitcher in the sample room. He learns that managers supervise their workers and assess any wasted movements during the work day. A worker could cost the shoe factory perhaps eight minutes of work in a week. Totally unacceptable! Alex has ideas. He has compassion. Should he, could he, risk expressing his ideas to his father whose profit margin is achieved through hard work, corruption and bribes? Ivy, in her own way, tries to shape Alex's path.

"The Emperor of Shoes" is a work of literary fiction which shines a spotlight on doing business and change, as a byproduct of technology and societal awareness in South China. "The Emperor of Shoes" by Spencer Wise is an excellent debut novel.

Thank you HARLEQUIN-Hanover Square Press and Net Galley for the opportunity to read and review "The Emperor of Shoes".

