

## Lovemaster'd: A Digital Journey to Ultimate Love and Happiness

**Craig Shoemaker**

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*Shoemaker demonstrates a comedic timing and cleverness, as well as a caring, empathetic voice.*

*Lovemaster'd* by comedian Craig Shoemaker follows a multimonth online conversation between two friends coping with divorce. Through the process, both grow in their understanding of themselves and each other, and move forward through their pain to ultimately find happiness—an invaluable reassuring message.

The story begins when Leah De Luca—a woman Shoemaker had met several times after his comedy shows—contacts him through Facebook private messaging: “Since I thought we might see you after your next show, I should probably let you know that Matt and I are splitting up after 30 years of marriage.” From there the two launch into a heart-to-heart about their struggles—Shoemaker and his wife had been divorced for about seven years. It’s heartening to see how Shoemaker offers the good, bad, and ugly of his own experience in an attempt to help the more recently divorced De Luca.

The book contains their messages in their entirety with very little extra explanation; the result is raw expression and the pair’s sometimes-faltering attempts to make sense of what’s happening and what’s already happened. What they share with each other and with readers meets the goal of the book: to commiserate with, comfort, and encourage people dealing with divorce.

The online conversation format has benefits: it feels relevant to modern life and gives each person a chance to give an in-depth look at their thoughts and feelings before the other person responds. But it also has drawbacks: many of the messages are quite long, so the lag time between self-disclosure and response, while adding depth, slows the pace of the narrative. Since, in a way, the characters are greeting each other each time they speak, the exchange of pleasantries and written acknowledgment (such as “I totally relate”) sometimes feels strange and bogs down the urgency of the conversation.

Like any real-life conversation, the tone varies—from honest self-reflection (“I lived a lie in my marriage to Debby; a lie of omission and lack of authenticity. I loved the IDEA of her, but not the real her”) to cutesy and clever (“My heart is phoning and I’m not declining this call”). Shoemaker’s background as a comedian shines through, even during the more philosophical monologues: “I have an I-Phone now. It has ‘Siri,’ a woman’s voice who dials up pretty much anything you ask for. I spoke into my phone, ‘Call my ex-wife.’ She responded, ‘Have you thought this one through?’”

The title of the book is based on Shoemaker’s highly popular, slightly lascivious comedy character, the Love Master. While this book bears the mark of Shoemaker’s humor, it more clearly shows his care for others; as he states in the introduction, “To make a living as a comic, calls for an ability to have a good sense of general vibration about people.” This persona, while a marked contrast to his stand-up character, is the perfect fit for this book.

*Lovemaster'd* is an honest, hopeful look at recovering from divorce. Those who have faced the difficulty and complications of both losing love and growing love will relate to Shoemaker and De Luca's insights.

MELISSA WUSKE (August 13, 2014)

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