As Shirley recalls it, "I was in my seventh month of pregnancy, but I looked like I was 14 months gone. I was also in the midst of cleaning an outdoor barbecue." At this point, lack paraded in to introduce his son for the first time.

"It's difficult to determine which of us was more petrified," Shirley states. "I crawled out of the soot and struggled for what seemed to be at least a half hour to get to my feet. David stared at me with a look I'll never forget as long as I live."

Shirley tried to regain her composure, but failed at every turn. The entire day was a calamity. The pregnant stepmother decided that the only way she could possibly make a comeback with David would be to give "what amounted to the greatest performance of my career." Shirley explains: "I set out to play a part-one of all caring, all loving, all devoted, just to David. I had made up my mind that the only way I was going to win that child over to my side was to shower him with so much attention and affection that he'd have to recognize it as love. He recognized it exactly for what it was -a fraud!

"I know it was a disastrous mistake now, but at the time it seemed like the only approach. Looking back on that tense period I can see that I had used the wrong kind of love to woo David. Ironically, any child could have seen that, but it's a mistake adults make all the time."

Shirley's campaign to win David over took on all the glitter and tinsel of a movie production. She made every effort to look the role of the movie queen after that first encounter. She tried to be glamorous and an understanding buddy to David, but she could feel him drifting away more and more. "You might say," Shirley states, "that I was trying to seduce David into loving me by using all those feminine tricks a girl uses to capture a man. It took me years to realize that you can't seduce a little boy. You've got to ignore all those complicated plans if you want to have a relationship with a child. The answer is really quite simple once you are aware of it. It's not a matter of what you 'should do' as much as what you 'shouldn't

Shirley confesses that she didn't begin to win David's heart over to her side until she finally stopped trying. She can best sum up the story this way: "I found the secret to unlocking his love the instant I stopped searching for it. The moment I began to mind my own business, he first started to tell me his, to confide in me and learn to trust me. The glamorous movie-star act was a flop because it wasn't real, and Davidor any other child, for that matter-will shy away from anyone who isn't honest with them.

"I found out the hard way that the only way anyone can ever learn anything about a child is to allow the child to teach younot vice versa. You must trade roles with him. Don't be a star-let him be the only star in your life. That's when your story will really begin-or end-depending on how you play it from there!"

-BY ED PORTER

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