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Desperate Housewives Pilot Script Analysis

Desperate Housewives has four protagonists: Lynette, Gabrielle, Bree, and Susan. Lynette's goals are still a bit nebulous in the pilot. She seems to want her husband to be more present in their marriage or at least someone to lighten the load of raising four children. She is constantly overwhelmed by her four children, especially her three rowdy sons. In one of the first scenes of the pilot, Lynette has to drag her sons out of a swimming pool during the wake for her deceased friend. Lynette's overworked situation is worsened by her husband, Tom, who is constantly away on business. When asked by an old acquaintance about her children, she has to lie that she loves her job as a housewife. When Tom returns from a business trip he does not stay long and is only interested in sex. He has no interest in the concerns of his wife or the curtesy to use a condom. Lynette's struggle is constant as she tries to raise her children and appear to others as a responsible mother.

In contrast, Gabrielle's goal is straight forward. Her goal in the pilot is to maintain her illicit/illegal affair with John, her underaged gardener. The romance between Gabrielle and Carlos is absent in their marriage, so she fills that void by sleeping around with John. However, Gabrielle still believes that she loves Carlos too much to leave him. When Carlos threatens to fire John for not cutting the grass (because he was too busy sleeping with Gabrielle), she has to mow the lawn behind his back. If Carlos noticed what Gabrielle was doing it could have lead to her affair getting exposed and if she did nothing then she would be stuck in a relationship without the romantic intimacy John provides.

Moving on to the third housewife, Bree, her goal during the pilot is to keep her family from distancing themselves from her due to her obsession with perfection. Bree's obsession with being the perfect housewife is first shown to cause issues during dinner at home. When her son gives the dinner she spent hours preparing a lukewarm review, she becomes highly defensive. It is during this scene that Bree's family first expresses their frustration with how extra and suffocating her actions are. Later when that family is at a steak house, Bree's husband Rex tells her he wants a divorce. The reasons he gives is that he cannot handle the overly perfect and sterile life he has with Bree, Rex wants imperfection and more room outside the expected. Even when Rex is in the hospital telling her the problem, Bree leaves to fix the flowers in the room. She also hides that she cried for several minutes afterward. The conflict for Bree is that her compulsion to remain the perfect housewife is pushing her family away.

Finally, Susan wants to get into a relationship with Mike Delfino, the plumber across the street. Susan's husband divorced her one year ago after cheating on her with his secretary. Now she desires a new companion, likely to replace her ex-husband. However, the promiscuous Edie begins pursuing Mike at the same time as Susan. When Edie takes Mike out for lunch, Susan spies on them. She notes every piece of body language in an attempt to deduce if Edie is successfully seducing Mike. While spying, Susan accidentally backs into Edie's red convertible and flees the scene as to not get caught. Towards the end of the pilot, Susan sneaks into Edie's house and hears her having sex with a man, who she assumes must be Mike. While crying at the loss of her possible lover, Susan accidentally sets fire to Edie's house. The man Edie was having sex with is sent to the hospital for smoke inhalation. While Susan is watching from the sidewalk, Mike reveals that he never was never at Eide's house. Susan still has a chance to court Mike. The primary conflict for Susan is if she will forge a romantic relationship with Mike.