

# **LOST SOLE**

A playlet  
By Craig Houk

PERUSAL

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### Synopsis

An estate attorney pays a welfare visit to Francis Carcaise, a reclusive widower living in a once-elegant country home that has quietly fallen into disrepair around him. As Francis – charming but increasingly disoriented – fixates on finding his missing shoe and reminisces about his late husband, Nelson, the conversation shifts from polite concern to mounting unease. Greer gradually uncovers troubling financial stagnation and signs of neglect, while Francis offers a poignant meditation on love, loneliness, and the hollowness of inherited wealth. What begins as a tense but civil check-in deepens into a chilling realization: Francis has already made a final decision about his unfinished business, and the missing shoe becomes the devastating clue that brings clarity to what has just occurred.

### Characters

**FRANCIS CARCAISE** Male, 60s or older

**GREER MCNICHOL** Female, 40s or older

### Place

The countryside.

### Time

Present.

### Setting

A grubby living room in a once upscale home.

*A grubby living room in a once-upscale country home. Late afternoon.*

*(The only light is sunlight filtering through a broken window, where greenery has begun to creep inside. A large dresser is wedged against the front door. A coffee setup rests on the table. Two vessels sit side by side on the mantel. A quiet moment. In the distance, a dog barks. A sudden knocking at the front door. Lights up. Another knock.)*

**FRANCIS**

*(Calling off from inside the house.)*

You'll have to let yourself in!

**GREER**

*(Calling off from outside the house.)*

Mr. Carcaise?

**FRANCIS**

*(Off.)*

I said, you'll have to let yourself in! I'm looking for my other shoe! It's got to be around here somewhere!

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

Oh... Uh... Well, I can wait!

**FRANCIS**

*(Off.)*

No, no, it's fine! The door's open!

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

Mr. Carcaise, it's Greer!

**FRANCIS**

*(Off.)*

Who?

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

Greer McNichol!

**FRANCIS**

*(Off.)*

I'm not sure I know a 'Greer McNichol'!

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

It's been a while! But we've met!

**FRANCIS**

*(Off.)*

You're not here to rob me, are you, Greer McNichol? Because if you are, you'll be sorely disappointed! There's nothing of value in here!

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

No, of course not!

**FRANCIS**

*(Off.)*

Good to know!

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

Look, maybe I—

**FRANCIS**

*(Off.)*

Come on in, then! I wouldn't mind the company! It's been a while since I've had visitors!

*(Greer tries the door. It won't budge.)*

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

I think it's locked!

**FRANCIS**

*(Off.)*

What's that?

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

The door! I can turn the knob, but... it won't open! Maybe it's stuck?

**FRANCIS**

*(Off.)*

Are you sure?

*(Greer tries again but no luck.)*

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

Yes, I'm sure!

**FRANCIS**

*(Off.)*

Well, that's strange! I usually leave it open! Where the hell is that other shoe?

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

Sorry?

**FRANCIS**

*(Off.)*

I said, I'll be right out!

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

Oh! Okay! No rush!

*(A beat. Then Francis enters neatly dressed – wool pants, button-down, jacket, perhaps a vest. Hair combed. One shoe.)*

**FRANCIS**

Well, there's your problem. There's a dresser in front of the door.

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

A dresser?

**FRANCIS**

Yes. Your guess is as good as mine. Anyway, give me a moment, I'll move it.

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

Be careful.

**FRANCIS**

I will be nothing but.

*(He reaches for the dresser and then pauses, noticing his hands. He turns them over, studying them, unsettled.)*

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

Everything okay?

**FRANCIS**

Yes. Yes, fine. Just... the dresser. I can't seem to get it to budge.

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

Maybe I can push from here.

**FRANCIS**

If you've got the strength.

**GREER**

*(Off.)*

You might want to stand clear.

**FRANCIS**

Will do.

*(Francis steps back. Greer forces the door slowly pushing it open, shifting the dresser just enough. She enters. She's dressed businesslike, but lighter, summer appropriate.)*

Well. That seems to have sorted everything. Greer McNichol, I presume?

**GREER**

Just Greer.

**FRANCIS**

And you can call me Francis. Come in. And close the door. Must be cold out there.

**GREER**

It's the middle of June.

**FRANCIS**

Oh. Right. Of course. Then it must be... warm.

**GREER**

A little. Cooler in here, though.

*(She shuts the door.)*

**FRANCIS**

The trees keep the place shaded.

**GREER**

They certainly do. Though I hope you don't mind me saying. It's quite overgrown out there. Took some effort just to reach the door. Thistles up to my elbows.

**FRANCIS**

I'm sorry to hear that.

**GREER**

And I had to get past your dog.

**FRANCIS**

My dog?

**GREER**

Mm-hm. Brownish-black. Short hair. Or none at all. Hard to tell.

**FRANCIS**

Ah. That's Duncan.

**GREER**

He seemed friendly enough. Though he just stood there, head tilted, watching me. I'll admit, it was a little unsettling.

**FRANCIS**

I'm sure he meant no harm.

**GREER**

No, I don't think he did. I got around him easily enough – just caught me off guard.

**FRANCIS**

He's a good boy. A bit protective, perhaps.

**GREER**

Fair enough.

**FRANCIS**

And the yard... yes. I usually keep up with it. I suppose I've fallen behind. Sorry.

**GREER**

No, it's fine. It's your property; I shouldn't intrude. But if you'd like, I could have someone come out. Tidy things up.

**FRANCIS**

"Tidy things up." How do you mean?

**GREER**

Hire someone. Landscaping, basic cleanup. Because... frankly, it's a mess. And it looks like the house could use some attention as well.

**FRANCIS**

Is that so?

*(He turns, taking in the room.)*

Oh my. What in the world...?

**GREER**

Something wrong?

**FRANCIS**

No. No. Just... surprised, I guess. I didn't realize how bad it had gotten. Looks like I've let everything go.

**GREER**

Don't be hard on yourself. It's a lot for one person.

**FRANCIS**

I suppose.

**GREER**

All the more reason to let someone help. A few minor repairs, some fresh paint, and it'll all be as good as new.

**FRANCIS**

And why would you do that?

**GREER**

You really don't remember me, do you?

**FRANCIS**

I'm afraid not.

**GREER**

Mr. Car/caise...

**FRANCIS**

/ Francis.

**GREER**

Francis. Your... husband, Nelson—

**FRANCIS**

Late husband.

**GREER**

Yes. I was the attorney hired by his family to manage the estate. Executor.

**FRANCIS**

Right. Yes, I remember now. Though all of that was settled a long time ago.

**GREER**

It was. I'm not here on business. I just thought I'd check in to see how you're doing. Whether you need anything. More of a welfare visit, I suppose. That's a nice outfit, by the way.

**FRANCIS**

Is it?

*(He looks down.)*

Oh. Well, thank you.

**GREER**

You look very nice.

**FRANCIS**

Perhaps a bit much for sitting around the house.

**GREER**

Maybe. But why not? Sometimes a person just wants to look nice. If we wait for a special occasion, we may never have one. Better to enjoy things while we can. Even alone.

**FRANCIS**

True enough. Though I can't seem to find my other shoe.

**GREER**

I'm sure it's here somewhere. In any case, I just wanted to make sure you're getting what you need.

**FRANCIS**

Would you like some coffee, Greer?

**GREER**

Coffee?

**FRANCIS**

Yes. I have a fresh pot right there.

**GREER**

Oh, uh—

**FRANCIS**

It's no trouble. Plenty of it.

**GREER**

Alright. That sounds nice, thank you.

**FRANCIS**

Help yourself.

**GREER**

Oh. You want me to—?

**FRANCIS**

My hands... seem to be acting up today. Having some trouble with my grip. Sorry.

**GREER**

That's alright. I can manage.

*(She moves to the coffee.)*

**FRANCIS**

And a cup for me as well, if you don't mind?

**GREER**

Of course. How do you take it?

**FRANCIS**

A little sugar. Dash of cream.

**GREER**

Got it.

*(Greer prepares the coffee.)*

**FRANCIS**

So. Tell me, Greer...

**GREER**

Mm hm?

**FRANCIS**

What is it you think I need?

**GREER**

I'm sorry?

**FRANCIS**

You said you wanted to be sure I'm getting what I need. So, what is that, exactly?

**GREER**

Right. Well... I suppose it's time we got down to brass tacks.

**FRANCIS**

I've nowhere to be. We can talk about whatever you like. Though I get the sense there's something specific – something important – you came to discuss.

**GREER**

Yes. As a matter of fact, there is.

*(She grimaces.)*

Yech.

**FRANCIS**

What's wrong?

**GREER**

The cream...

**FRANCIS**

What about it?

**GREER**

It's gone bad, Francis. And the coffee's cold

**FRANCIS**

Really?

**GREER**

I'm afraid so.

**FRANCIS**

That can't be right. I picked up the cream yesterday. And the coffee – I made it just before you arrived.

**GREER**

It's really not a big deal.

**FRANCIS**

Of course it's a big deal. Why would I serve cold coffee with—?

**GREER**

Francis, are you alright?

**FRANCIS**

What do you mean?

**GREER**

How are you feeling? Your health?

**FRANCIS**

Aside from a bit of numbness in my hands – and that's recent – I'm perfectly fine.

**GREER**

And your... emotional health?

**FRANCIS**

Emotional health?

**GREER**

Your mental health.

**FRANCIS**

What are you suggesting, Greer?

**GREER**

Look – and I'm sorry if this comes as a surprise, but – I do have access to your financial records. Yours and Nelson's. I've been monitoring your spending

**FRANCIS**

I see.

**GREER**

And frankly, I'm concerned. Not so much by what I've seen but by what I haven't.

**FRANCIS**

I don't follow.

**GREER**

Aside from your utilities – which are paid automatically – you haven't spent much of anything. In fact, there's been virtually no activity for nearly a year.

**FRANCIS**

I get by on very little.

**GREER**

Francis–

**FRANCIS**

I have a vegetable garden out back. And I keep some cash here for groceries and the like.

**GREER**

Except you told me there's nothing of value in this house.

**FRANCIS**

And you told me you weren't here to rob me.

**GREER**

I'm not.

**FRANCIS**

That remains to be seen.

**GREER**

Listen, Francis. Nelson left everything to you–

**FRANCIS**

He did.

**GREER**

And while I can appreciate that you're being... frugal, it just doesn't make much sense to me that you're not using that money to take care of this place. Or yourself. Or even investing it in some way.

**FRANCIS**

I don't need more than what I have.

**GREER**

And that's all well and good, except–

**FRANCIS**

Except what?

**GREER**

You have family, Francis.

**FRANCIS**

Nelson's family.

**GREER**

Yes. And they could use a little help.

**FRANCIS**

The Carcaise family.

**GREER**

Alright. I think I see where this is going.

**FRANCIS**

My checkbook's in the desk drawer. Foot of the stairs.

**GREER**

Your checkbook? I'm not sure I—

**FRANCIS**

*(Moving to the desk.)*

Who do I make them out to? And for how much? Nelson had a big family, so I imagine—

**GREER**

This isn't the way to handle it, Francis.

*(Francis reaches the desk. He goes for the drawer and then stops, noticing his hands again. He rubs his fingers together, distracted.)*

Francis?

**FRANCIS**

*(Turning back to her.)*

Nelson's been gone... what? Seven years now? Maybe more. I'm not very good at keeping track of these things – my mental health and all. It doesn't matter. He's gone. And he was all I had. The money, this house, the land... none of it means anything to me. Just like I mean nothing to his family.

**GREER**

That's not / true.

**FRANCIS**

/ Oh, but it is true. They didn't much care for me taking his name. I've come to regret it myself. And I've never been one to attach sentiment to things. Nelson doesn't live on in objects. He's not here in spirit. I don't feel him.

**GREER**

Right.

**FRANCIS**

You know, before he died... I'd never really felt loneliness. Not once. I was an only child, with indifferent parents, left to fend for myself. But I didn't mind. It was all I knew. I assumed that's just how life worked, so I made the most of it. I leaned into it. I was smart, resourceful. I had an imagination. And I learned – early on – how to be comfortable on my own. I wasn't lonely. I was simply alone. And I was fine. For forty-some years, I was fine. And then... Nelson. Out of nowhere. And for the first time in my life, I felt something I'd never felt before. Love. Real love. And an attraction to another person. And oh, he was... different. He kept boxes and boxes of hamburger wrappers from his travels – still up in the attic, if anyone's interested. No idea why. He just loved hamburgers. Maybe they're worth something. And he carried flat caps in the trunk of his car – every color, every fabric – depending on the weather, his mood. He looked very handsome in a flat cap. But more than that, he was kind. He cherished every moment of every day. And do you know what he appreciated most? That I didn't need him. I enjoyed his company, but I didn't depend on it. I had no expectations. I didn't need anything from him. I was just... happy he was there. Something he never quite got from his family

**GREER**

I see.

**FRANCIS**

His wife knew, you know. About him. About his... proclivities.

**GREER**

I didn't know. I don't think any of us did.

**FRANCIS**

Yes, well... she did. And she was fine with it. Or at least, that's what Nelson told me. And why not? By all accounts, they had a very nice life together. She was well provided for; he gave her children and all those grandchildren... An ungrateful bunch, for the most part. But what can you do?

*(In the distance, the dog barks again.)*

**GREER**

Is he alright out there?

**FRANCIS**

Duncan? Oh, he's fine. He was always happiest running free in the yard.

**GREER**

Was?

**FRANCIS**

Oh, yes. He's... been dead quite some time now. I remember because I had him cremated. He's up there on the mantel. Next to Nelson.

**GREER**

I... I'm sorry, I don't understand. Then what—

**FRANCIS**

I'm not a religious man, Greer – never have been – so perhaps we can spare ourselves that awkward conversation. Go on. Grab my checkbook, will you? We'll start there. Then perhaps we can meet again to discuss changes to my will. Over a proper cup of coffee. I'll make sure the cream is fresh. I do think it's important the Carcaise family gets what they deserve.

*(Greer doesn't move.)*

Go on. Desk drawer. There's a pen in there as well.

**GREER**

I think it might be better if we scheduled a time for you to come into my office. For something a bit more formal—

**FRANCIS**

In due time, Greer. For now, consider it a gift.

**GREER**

Alright. If that's what you want.

**FRANCIS**

It is.

*(Greer crosses to the desk. She notices something on the floor.)*

**GREER**

Francis...

**FRANCIS**

What is it?

**GREER**

Your... other shoe. I think it's under the desk.

**FRANCIS**

It is?

**GREER**

Yes, right here.

*(She picks it up. It's dusty and web covered. Francis moves toward her.)*

**FRANCIS**

Well, I'll be... I knew it was around here somewhere. Now how on earth did—

*(He trails off. A thought clicks. He smiles.)*

Oh... my, my, my... Do you know what this means?

**GREER**

What?

**FRANCIS**

It means you're a day late and a dollar short, my dear.

**GREER**

How so?

**FRANCIS**

You know what? It doesn't matter. On second thought... best to leave things exactly as they are.

**GREER**

Except we still have some unfinished business here, Mr. Car—

**FRANCIS**

Francis.

**GREER**

Francis.

FRANCIS

It's only me who has unfinished business. And while I appreciate you making the trip all the way out here, I think it's best – for everyone – that we forget about the money, the house, the land... all of it

GREER

Is there something you need to tell me?

FRANCIS

There's nothing to tell. And I think you should go.

GREER

Francis—

FRANCIS

I'm not asking.

GREER

Alright. I understand. Though I have to admit, I'm a little concerned.

FRANCIS

Don't be. There's nothing you can do. So please... go.

*(Greer doesn't move.)*

Should we add impertinence to your growing list of questionable qualities, Greer?

GREER

It takes more than this to rattle me, Francis. Whatever's going on – whatever's happened here – I can handle it. I'm here to help you.

FRANCIS

So, you keep saying. Well... alright then. If you must know. That shoe. The one you're holding...

GREER

What about it?

FRANCIS

It looks as though it fell off... when I did that.

*(Francis tilts his gaze upward. Greer follows his line of sight. Her expression shifts – confusion to realization, then horror. From above, a rope drops, a noose slowly swinging into view. End of playlet.)*

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