

## THE AUDIBLE

By Michael Zielinski

The curtain rises on DON MADISON, NICOLE SNYDER and PAMELA AUSTIN in their family room. Madison and Austin are in their late 20s and quite attractive. Snyder is in her early teens and quite cute. Madison sits on a sofa, holding a football and a cellphone. Austin does various yoga postures. Snyder sits on an upholstered chair, holding a large crucifix.

### NICOLE SNYDER

The kids think it's so cool to live with you guys. The boys keep asking me to get autographs from my uncle Don Madison, superstar quarterback for the New York Jets. The girls keep asking me what Pamela Austin, his live-in girlfriend and famous fashion model, looks like without makeup. And if her closet is bigger than a subway car.

### DON MADISON

What do think about living with us so far, Nicole? I know it's only been a couple months and you're still mourning the loss of your parents in that horrible car crash. It's been a major adjustment living with Pamela and myself because we're not exactly the parental types. But your mom was my only sibling and I loved her very much even though we lived much different lives. I was flattered that she picked me to have custody of you.

### NICOLE SNYDER

You're my only relative in the world, Uncle Don. It was either you or an orphanage. Perhaps I should have gone there. My mother said you always were too busy to come visit us in Indianapolis. She said you never go to church, which I have found out to be true. And she said you are living in sin with Pamela. (*She pauses to check her text messages on her phone*) Which is why you guys never take me to church. Afraid you'll get struck by lightning?

PAMELA AUSTIN

You grew up in a strict Catholic household. Don and I aren't particularly religious but that doesn't make us bad people. But you're right. I'll see that you get to Mass on Sundays since Don is busy on Sundays trying to lead the J-E-T-S to the Super Bowl.

NICOLE SNYDER

Will you go to Mass with me?

PAMELA AUSTIN

I have yoga class on Sunday mornings. I will have Mrs. Gomez go with you.

NICOLE SNYDER

Mrs. Gomez? Mrs. Gomez? Mrs. Gomez is the one who really has custody of me because you guys are too busy with your football and your modeling and your celebrity world to have time for me. We seldom even eat dinner together because Pamela doesn't eat and Uncle Don is sequestered in his office having protein bars and drinks while studying game films. My dinner conversations are on Skype with my friends back home in Indianapolis. I am being raised by the unemployed wife of the New York Jets' equipment manager.

DON MADISON

Please be patient with us. Being a parent wasn't in my playbook. It's been like calling an audible and changing the play at the line of scrimmage. I promise you that you will see much more of me in the offseason. Except for my workout sessions, mini-camps and when I travel to shoot commercials. (*His cellphone rings*). A million dollars? I'll take it! (*He returns his gaze to Snyder*). But we will take you along Nicole to L.A. and other cool places. And now you have a generous allowance and anything you need. And Mrs. Gomez is a sweet lady who loves you. She's unemployed because she has a prison record.

NICOLE SNYDER

She told me about all the shoplifting arrests and she has confessed her sins to a priest. And you obviously are trying to buy my affections. Money means nothing to me. I am going to be a nun when I grow up and take a vow of poverty. The vow of poverty helps nuns engage God's mission.

DON MADISON

Whoa, you've either been brainwashed in Catholic school or you're joking.

NICOLE SNYDER

I'm serious. That way I won't spend a fortune like Pamela on cosmetics, clothing and jewelry. Instead of squandering all that money, you should give it to the poor.

PAMELA AUSTIN

I'm in the beauty business, Nicole. If I don't look good, I don't work. Besides, Don and I contribute to a lot of charitable causes.

NICOLE SNYDER

Do one more charitable donation and send me to parochial school. This is the first time I've ever gone to public school. I actually miss wearing a Catholic school uniform. Girls at my public school obsess over clothing. Which is why they think you are something special. By the way, I tell them that you don't look so hot without makeup.

PAMELA AUSTIN

Well, that's not being very kind, is it?

NICOLE SNYDER

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

DON MADISON

Beauty is what inside a person.

NICOLE SNYDER

Then why do you date only beautiful women? My father used to say that Derek Jeter and Alex Rodriguez had nothing on you in that department.

PAMELA AUSTIN

Your uncle's dating days are over.

NICOLE SNYDER

Then why doesn't he put a ring on your finger? If you're living together, you should at the very least be engaged. Even then, you're going to go to hell because premarital sex is a mortal sin.

DON MADISON

You're much too young to know about sex, Nicole.

NICOLE SNYDER

Hardly. And you don't have to have sex to know about it. I have no interest in sex. I am going to be a nun and give my life to Christ. I will be the bride of Jesus Christ.

PAMELA AUSTIN

If you break up, your divorce settlement will be a bonanza. Do you know how much gold they have in the Vatican?

DON MADISON

Pamela!

NICOLE SNYDER

That's sacrilegious! What are you, an atheist?

PAMELA AUSTIN

I'm agnostic.

NICOLE SNYDER

Same thing.

PAMELA AUSTIN

It is not. An atheist doesn't believe in God. An agnostic doesn't claim to know whether God exists or not.

NICOLE SNYDER

Read the Bible and you will know.

DON MADISON

I tried to read the Bible once but found it a tough read. Too many begats. And the Old Testament God is fiercer than any football coach I've ever had. I would much rather read my football playbook. It's less violent than the Bible. Nobody drowns, nobody turns into a pillar of salt and nobody is damned.

NICOLE SNYDER

Football is your god.

DON MADISON

It's my life, not my God. I do believe in God. Just not in organized religion. I pray for you. I pray for your parents' souls. I pray for Pamela. And I believe God loves football or why else would Notre Dame have a team?

NICOLE SNYDER

It's not right for me to live with you since you and Pamela are living in sin. Either get married or kick her out or find me a good Catholic foster home who sends me to Catholic school.

DON MADISON

You are awfully judgmental, young lady. Like I said, I'm no Bible scholar. But I do know that Jesus said: "Judge not, lest you be judged. Let he who is without sin cast the first stone."

PAMELA AUSTIN

We don't believe we are living in sin. But I believe in marriage. Don, do you believe in marriage?

DON MADISON

Of course. Someday.

PAMELA AUSTIN

Do you love me?

DON MADISON

You know that I do.

PAMELA AUSTIN

So why don't you marry me?

DON MADISON

During football season? Come on, the playoffs are only a month away. A wedding would be a distraction right now.

NICOLE SNYDER

Busy people get married all the time, Uncle Don. It takes an hour. Even less if I tell the priest to keep the sermon short.

PAMELA AUSTIN

Your uncle is a lapsed Catholic and I have no religion. A priest wouldn't marry us. Besides, a justice of the peace can do the ceremony in 10 minutes or less. And a quiet, simple and private wedding will keep the paparazzi from crawling up our ass. I don't want to wind up on the cover of *People* and have fashion critics dissecting my wedding dress. While Don and I live in a media fishbowl, we don't need to have our wedding ceremony going viral on social media. Some things are sacred.

NICOLE SNYDER

What's sacred about a wedding in a district justice's office?

PAMELA AUSTIN

It will be sacred to me.

DON MADISON

Why don't we just get engaged first and get married in the offseason?

PAMELA AUSTIN

Goddamn, is that a proposal?

DON MADISON

Sort of, I guess.

PAMELA AUSTIN

Oh my God! Oh my God! (*She races over to join Madison on the sofa and hugs him*). You definitely aren't the romantic type on bended knee. But I'll give you a pass because you have had ACL surgery on your right knee. So, my answer is YES! (*She leans over and kisses him on the lips*). I'm so happy. I've been dying to have you ask.

DON MADISON

You have?

PAMELA AUSTIN

Whenever I would try to begin the conversation, you would immediately become distracted by football. You're a great quarterback and a great guy but you need a periscope to see the real world. Marriage and children will give balance to your life.

DON MADISON

Children? We're busy raising Nicole right now.

NICOLE SNYDER

Mrs. Gomez is busy raising me.

PAMELA AUSTIN

Don and I are going to get busy raising you. Or perhaps you should be raising us. You have wisdom beyond your years. Thank you for bringing up marriage today. You now are my best friend. Who ever thought a future nun would be my best friend?

NICOLE SNYDER

No need to thank me. I was just doing the Lord's work. I don't know much about football but I do know that Uncle Don throws a lot of touchdown passes. And he just threw a great Hail Mary pass that will save you two from the fires of hell. Of course, you might fry for a while in purgatory for not getting married Catholic.

PAMELA AUSTIN

Signal touchdown, Don, or I'll break your passing arm. (*Laughs*).

DON MADISON

Well. (*He grins and raises both arms to signal a touchdown. He then kisses Pamela tenderly for a moment*). Get over here Sister Nicole and join us on the sofa for a group family hug.



## NICOLE SNYDER

I thought you'd never ask. (*She smiles and races into both their arms on the sofa.*) I believe that Uncle Don's epiphany tonight rivals Paul's on the Road to Damascus. Mom and Dad up in heaven must have pulled some strings with God to get this miracle to happen.

## DON MADISON

Get a selfie, babe. (*He hands his cellphone to Austin, who sets up a selfie of the three of them.*)

## PAMELA AUSTIN

Hashtag Jesus Christ!

(BLACKOUT)