

DIVORCE AGONY



Nicole is terrified of losing custody of her kids Connor and Isabella



later - and his demons had gotten the upper hand by the time he married Nicole in a romantic Catholic ceremony on June 25 in Australia.

"Keith's close friends knew he was using cocaine and drinking again. But he lied to Nicole," said the friend. "He assured her he was OK. What she didn't know was that he was drinking and using coke when she went to sleep at night and he was up late working on his music."

A rep for Keith denied that he

on, said the friend. Then "Keith went on a bender and overdosed on alcohol and coke between shows on the East Coast." Nicole found out and panicked.

Nicole immediately flew to his side from England.

"Keith was determined to do a gig at a casino in Connecticut, then head to an awards show in Australia. But Nicole rallied members of the immediate family and staged an intervention."

When he checked into rehab, Keith - the Country Music Entertainer of the Year in 2005 - released the following statement: "I deeply regret the hurt this has caused Nicole and the ones that love and support me.

"One can never let one's guard down on recovery and I'm afraid that I have. With the strength and unwavering support I am blessed to have from my wife, family and friends, I am determined and resolved to a positive outcome."

As *The ENQUIRER* previously reported, Keith's friends urged him not to marry Nicole because he was newly sober.

Experts advise recovering addicts to postpone any life-altering decisions until they have completely overcome their ad-

diction. In fact, Keith called off the wedding at one point to concentrate on his sobriety - but Nicole confirmed their engagement in May.

"Nicole gave Keith a marry-me-or-else ultimatum and he didn't want to lose her. So he gave in," said the friend.

According to reports, their prenuptial agreement states that if they divorce, Keith will receive \$600,000 for each year married. But if he uses illegal drugs or drinks excessively, he'll receive nothing.

"Everyone feels sorry for Nicole, but she was so in love that she had blinders on when it came to Keith," continued the source.

"When they married, Keith dismissed his sobriety coach. It would have been too difficult to be married and have another person with you 24 hours a day. But Keith should have kept the coach."

Adding to Nicole's nightmare, sources say Keith's relapse opened the door for her ex-husband Tom Cruise to file for full custody of their adopted children - Isabella, 13, and Connor, 11. If Tom believes his children are in any danger around Keith it would surprise anyone for him to keep his children out of the environment.

The children were with Nicole Sunday, Oct. 22, at an L.A. hotel. Late that afternoon, Cruise picked up in a Ford Mustang to take them home.

Shortly afterward, Nicole spotted crying her eyes out sobbing into her cell phone.

"Nicole's priority has always been the kids. Her nightmare would be for Tom to go for full custody for her to end up losing the kids good."

Nicole is absolutely devastated by Keith's relapse... and she's dreading another divorce

misled Nicole about his sobriety and that a recent overdose led him to enter rehab. However, insiders say his substance abuse escalated after Nicole jetted off to England in early September to film her upcoming movie "The Golden Compass."

Nicole had no idea what was going