

Chapter 16

The Lair of the Vampires

I WAS LIVING IN A MANSION IN MALIBU in 1975. Beer and success went hand in hand, while whiskey waited in the wings. The phenomenal acceptance of *Nightmare* was coming at me fast, like a speeding meteorite. There were musicians and celebrities in our dressing room at the end of every show—John Lennon, David Cassidy, Lou Reed, Todd Rundgren, the Doors, Aerosmith, Andy Warhol. I was on constant tour. The original band was history. Now I was surrounded by topflight session musicians, an able road crew, a private jet, and Shep's management organization that saw to our every need, 24/7.

As soon as I opened my eyes in the morning, my first reflex was to reach over and grab a cold beer from a cooler stash I had an arm's length from my bed. Then there was more beer on the jet. More and more beer all day. The world was at my feet. I wasn't shooting heroin and I wasn't snorting cocaine—none of that evil stuff. It was just beer. Except nobody noticed that I was drinking more than a couple six-packs a day.

Even when I was drinking at my heaviest, I *was* Mr. Nice Guy. I wasn't an angry, difficult, mean, or fighting drunk. I was a nice guy drunk—a rich, successful, respectable drunk—and I subconsciously credited the alcohol for giving me the fame and gold records, and the drive and courage to succeed. But I was also a pitiful guy. I couldn't say no to anybody about anything, because I hated conflict. I wish I could have said no to alcohol, but instead, I became the most functional alcoholic you could ever meet—a virtual touring and recording machine. Push me on stage or in a studio, and I'd never miss a word to a song. Put me in a movie and I never flubbed a line. I could do *The Tonight Show* (and I did twice) and be as lucid as any of Johnny's

Chapter 24

Prodigal Son

FOR A TIME AFTER WORD GOT OUT that Alice Cooper was a Christian, I would hear a deafening hush when walking into a room filled with some of my buddies, longtime acquaintances, and musician friends.

“All of a sudden you can’t swear around me because I’m a Christian? Guys, I’ve heard the words before, okay? I’m not a nun. I’m not the Pope. I’m still the same guy. I’m just a guy who’s a Christian.”

My life has improved in so many ways. My kids are great, a reflection of how my family is now grounded. My youngest, Sonora, was born in 1993. My relationship with Sheryl is beyond great. I couldn’t ask for a more beautiful family.

For me, Christianity is an ongoing, every-single-day kind of existence. The first thing I do each morning is thank the Lord for yet another day aboveground. I look at where I am. I count my blessings—he gave me a place to live, a great wife, cool kids, a great manager and friend.

One way I’ve put my golf addiction to good use is by hosting my own Alice Celebrity Golf Tournament—it’s been running since 1997. I bring in fifty celebrities for fifty five-person teams competing in a two-day tournament. Each team bids on a celebrity they want to play with—say, Leslie Nielsen or Elke Sommer. I don’t necessarily gun for the biggest celebrity names—although we do attract big ones like Dennis Hopper and Cheech Marin—but instead I try to get unique people . . . a character actor from the movie *Blazing Saddles*, or the guy who played the trumpet in *F Troop*. Or somebody from a classic TV sitcom, like David Cassidy from the *Partridge Family*, Donnie Most from *Happy Days*, *Hill Street Blues*’s Ed Marinaro, Lee Majors of the *Bionic Man* . . . or a game-show host like Chuck Woolery, a

movie star like Richard Roundtree from *Shaft*, or a rocker like Meat Loaf, Dave Mustaine, Dweezil Zappa, Jack Blades, or Don Felder. Those are the celebrities who are fun and memorable to play with. They also have extremely appealing personalities, with a million stories to swap on the green.

All proceeds from my tournament go to the Solid Rock Foundation, which I founded in 1995. Solid Rock is a nonprofit goodwill foundation that helps address the physical and social needs of teenagers and children. All the money that goes into Solid Rock is distributed to various other teen organizations that we believe in and research heavily, or for college scholarships. For example, recently we gave money to one center that specializes in eating disorders for girls. We gave money, a sizable sum per year for ten years, to another organization in Arizona called Neighborhood Ministries—they *really* take on the hard cases of disadvantaged kids.

When you first start a foundation, before you're established, nobody really believes in you. So we started by putting on our golf tournament and an annual Christmas variety show, Christmas Pudding, for which I get every kind of artist imaginable to sign up to do two or three songs. Country, pop, rock, metal, even magicians and dancers—it's a true vaudeville type of Christmas show. Now we hold money-raising events around the calendar, staging marathon events like "100 Holes of Golf."

Solid Rock has finally become so established that we have a bold new project lined up: We're preparing to build our own teen center. Grand Canyon College, who gave me an honorary doctorate degree, offered us access to five acres of prime real estate for us to build what we're calling The Rock.

I want The Rock to be a place for kids who have no place to go, especially kids whose worlds are mired in the drug scene or youth gangs. Instead of walking home from school and having to deal with street gangs and the temptations of drug dealers, kids can go to The Rock and do their homework or play basketball. Although it's a Christian-based charity, we don't beat them over the head with a Bible. We're just trying to do something good for a bunch of kids. Should they reach out, spiritual counselors would be available, but it's not about evangelism—it's about keeping our kids safe.