

“Well, we’re going to discuss The Ohana Project,” he said firmly. “You’re welcome to join us if you want.”

Greg was a little surprised that they’d given up so easily on the other topics. This was the only one he was willing to talk about right now. It was the only one he’d come to a measure of peace about. He knew it was time to give it up, to let his family take it and make it happen. He was ready to see if it would become God’s ministry rather than just his dream. He was even okay with giving it to someone else if they could make it happen. He absolutely discounted Beth’s suggestion that he would be able to run it. He knew his own failings so he knew he couldn’t do it, but he truly believed God wanted it done. From the first day he’d started working on the business plan with Beth, he’d always known he was going to eventually have to give it up. Might as well be now.

“So talk,” Greg said without moving from his position on the couch.

Luke and Heather both looked at Steve. He leaned forward and opened the folder that was sitting on the coffee table in front of him.

“You and Beth did a great job getting the idea down on paper,” Steve said. “I find it very interesting that our family already has some of the critical positions. Did you notice that?”

“It was one of the first things I noticed when we began to talk about how it would work.”

“I haven’t seen anything yet,” Luke leaned toward Steve. “Heather just told me about it on the phone yesterday. I assume that I’m one of those critical positions since I’m a family lawyer.”

“And Nalani,” Greg said, still laying on the couch with his arm over his face. “You can’t just put people in families, you have to help them heal from the hurts of their past.”

“What if someone doesn’t want to have counseling?” Heather asked.

“Then you don’t place them,” Greg shrugged. “If they want to stay the same way they are when they come to you, then they may as well leave without wasting your time.”

“You indicate counseling for the families adopting too,” Steve handed a sheaf of papers to Luke who began to scan them.

“Of course. There’re gonna be problems from their end too.”

“What if they don’t think they need counseling?” Steve asked.

“Then they’re fools and you don’t need to work with them,” Greg said abruptly.

“That’s rather harsh,” Heather said in surprise.

“I’m feeling a little harsh right now Heather,” Greg said bitterly. “If you want a kinder, gentler me, then leave and come back in a year or two.”

The others exchanged surprised looks.

“That’s uncharacteristic of you, Greg,” Luke said quietly. “Are you sure you don’t want to talk about –?”

“No I don’t. If you want to talk about this, then talk. I gotta be at work at three.”

Heather started to say something, but Steve laid his hand on her knee and shook his head. He pointed to the papers in front of him. Greg didn’t see the exchange.

“So why do you want investigators also?” Steve asked calmly.

“Mainly to help keep out the predators.”

“What if someone has a criminal record?” Luke asked cautiously.

“What do you mean?” Greg raised his arm and his head so he could glare at his brother. “You don’t think you should eliminate them, do you? That’s where one of the greatest needs is.”

“No, I obviously don’t think we should eliminate them,” Luke said calmly, “but I want to know what your thoughts were to protect potential families.”

“First thing, it’s right on the application,” Greg sat up with a sigh. He stared down at the coffee table as he talked. “If your investigators discover a

criminal record that an applicant didn't report, he's automatically canned. If the background check matches what he reported, then you need referrals from pastors or chaplains who've known him at least a year or two. Or whatever you guys think is the best time frame. You and Nalani probably have a better idea about that than I do. How long does it take to have a realistic assurance that someone really has changed? Then of course, he's gotta have counseling like everyone else. And after the investigator, the pastor and the counselor have all given him the go-ahead then he gets to be cross-examined by the lawyer. If he makes it past all four levels, then you can be relatively certain he's adoptable."

"What if he was a sexual predator?" Heather asked.

"That's a lot tougher," Greg briefly made eye contact with her for the first time. Heather was shocked by the depth of sorrow she saw in his eyes. "They need family, yes, as much as anyone if not more, but you can't trust them enough to place them in a regular family. Too risky. But you can pair them up with people like the Colonel was before he got snared by Steve. He didn't have any family to be put at risk, but he had the compassion and the toughness to father someone with that kind of past."

"What about the social workers?" Steve asked. "Why did you put them in?"

"I didn't," Greg said shortly, looking back down at the coffee table. "Beth did. I don't really understand why."

"What about the ministry connections?" Heather asked. "You have us connected to all kinds of other ministries, not only to foster care and other keiki ministries."

"There aren't enough Christians actively involved in serving God and serving others. You'll be working with people who've already taken a step out of their comfort zones, so it's the perfect opportunity to encourage them to get involved somewhere else too. Getting the families involved together increases the odds that they'll stick with it and be active. Just think about how many dying children might be saved because you push people to give back even while they're still receiving."

"So how are we finding these people?"

"You visit churches of course." Greg massaged the back of his neck with both hands, still looking down at the coffee table. "They'll be your best source of families, but you'll probably find quite a few orphans there too. You also connect with foster care agencies and get people who age out of the system. You talk to chaplains in prison. And you can't forget to get on military installations. You need a web site, brochures, get on talk shows, all that kind of stuff. That's why you need a good public relations person to help figure all that out."

"So, let's say we've connected with a church that wants to know more about the ministry. How do you present it?"

“First, I don’t think you can ever talk about this ministry without also presenting the information for the keiki currently in the foster care system. Some people will be interested in keiki where they wouldn’t be interested in adopting an adult. You’ve already got their attention, so push that too. Don’t be afraid of losing families to the keiki foster care/adoption people. It’s more a matter of preventing keiki from becoming clients sometime down the road. So always bring someone from one of those places with you or at least have their brochures on hand. Then you show the church from the bible how important God sees family. Show them the need and the blessing. It’ll probably work best if you have a mini application for situations like that.”

“What if a family comes to you and they already have an adoptee?” Luke asked. “Like if Heather hadn’t married Steve and we wanted to adopt Steve and he wanted to be adopted. What do you do then?”

“I think you have a waiver if their intent is to skip the normal process and just use the legal arm of the ministry,” Greg shrugged, “but you would really know that better, since you’re the legal department.”