Brass comes back into the room. “Don’t feel bad, Gil - - everybody's wrong now and then. Suicide, right?”
“Right,” Grissom says.
Brass grins.
“Everybody is wrong now and then,”
Brass frowned in thought, “Walk me through it.”
“Glad to - - and the D.A.’s office will be able to convince a jury too.”
“You’re saying…not only is it murder, but you know who the killer is?”
“We know - - our rookie here really solved it.”
“Go on.”
“I’ll tell you how first, then I’ll tell you who,” Grissom says.
“Let’s start with the photo on his desk - - it shows Stewart Bradley holding a left-handed driver. If he is left-handed, why is the gun he supposedly shot himself with in his right hand?”
Brass’s skepticism begins to fade. “Okay…it’s unlike a left-handed person would hold a weapon in that way…but it’s not impossible…”
“No, but something else is: the wound shows no sign of stippling. As you know, Jim, if a victim is shot at close range, like a suicide - - not only hit by the bullet, but by fragments and burned powder, which cause tiny hemorrhages around the wound area - - stippling.”
“Lack of stippling indicates that Bradley was shot from a distance…”
“Now you’re right. We used luminol to find blood on the desk - - blood our killer thought he had wiped away - - or thought as much. Suicide victims don’t clean up after themselves. The rookie also noticed that the pistol’s hammer was back and the safety on. Bradley wouldn’t have put the safety on after he shot himself, but an action target shooter like Damon would automatically. It’s second nature to those guys to put the safety on.
Brass grins, “Gotta say it - - good work, rookie.”
“Not to mention the note,” Grissom says.
Brass asks, “What about the note?”
“If you’ll notice, the word ‘truely’ is misspelled. It should be T-R-U-L-Y.”
“What’s that tell us? A lot of people might misspell it that way.”
“Ah, but that’s the first real clue to who did it, Jim. Look at the picture again: Bradley’s nephew has inscribed it.”
“…”He misspelled it there, too. So, the nephew did this?”
“That’s the implication,” Grissom says, “but not all the evidence.”
“Glad to hear it - - we need more than poor spelling to put your suspect away.”
“The rookie found a hair on the keyboard - - a brown hair - - a natural brown hair. Stewart Bradley and Nina Elam both have gray hair, although Nina colors hers. Check the photo again, Damon is a brown-haired guy. When we have the lab results, we’ll be able to see if we have a DNA match from the buccal swab to the hair to Damon, presumably transferred when he typed the alleged suicide note.”
“Sure would help if Damon’s fingerprints turned up on the keyboard,” Brass says.
Grissom smiles, “Actually that’s another mistake Damon made. His fingerprints are not on the keyboard…but neither are anyone else’s. It’s been wiped clean.”
“And if Stewart typed the note, his fingerprints would still be on the keyboard!”
“Exactly. A suicide would hardly bother to wipe the keyboard of his prints. He wouldn’t care.”
“So, Damon murdered his uncle.”
“We won’t know that for a certainty until we’ve looked at our lab results. But if we’re on the right track, there’s one last piece of evidence that should lock the cell door on our loving nephew. Though the keyboard was wiped clean, the rookie found a fingerprint on the note. Unlike a less porous surface, the print isn’t on the paper. It’s in it!” Damon couldn’t wipe off the prints where he pulled the note out of the printer tray, then laid it on the desk. If the prints on the note match the ones I took from Damon…you’ll have your killer.”