



FIGURE 1.5 "The Case of the Dead Musician"

The Case of the Dead Musician

Anton Karazai had amassed a great fortune in his seventy years as a world-famous pianist, performing for presidents and parliaments, kings and queens, in all the greatest cities' concert halls and children's hospitals. Anyone who watched Mr. Karazai perform understood immediately that he loved his music above and beyond anything else. Music—playing the piano—was his life.

Yesterday evening, May 16, 2006, however, Mr. Karazai's only son and sole heir phoned the police and reported that his father had hanged himself from the chandelier in the piano room at his estate. When the police arrive, they took several pictures of the scene. One of those pictures appears above in Figure 1.5. The police noted that Karazai had been hanged by a cord taken from the set of drapes in the corner window of the room and that his feet hung about two feet above the stool beneath him. They also noted that several pieces of steel wire had been ripped from the piano.

The coroner's report confirmed that Mr. Karazai died from asphyxiation. Inspection of his neck revealed a single, thin, skin breaking line with a small amount of blood across the Adam's apple.

Since it is too small to read in the picture, here is Mr. Karazai's last journal entry in its entirety:

May 16, 2006. *Have been sad for weeks now. My strength diminishes every day. It is even difficult for me to play the piano. Sometimes, even piano fails to cheer me. Sometimes my failing ability makes me angry. Yesterday I actually kicked my piano! But my ninety-year-old legs could hardly hurt a little bird. Only my son remains, my only son and the sole heir to all that I have earned and collected of this incredible but lonely life. I wonder if he knows what he will be getting when I die. Perhaps. But perhaps not. I will try to play something simple to cheer me before I retire for the evening—perhaps something from Debussy's "Children's Corner," a wonderful collection of happy beautiful melodies.*

The Assignment: You are the investigator reading the reports above and inspecting the picture of the scene. Mr. Karazai’s son claims that his father hanged himself. What do you think is the truth? From the evidence available, make a case for what you think really happened. If you believe that other evidence is necessary, make a recommendation about what other evidence might need to be collected. Before you begin to write your report, list the evidence and warrants you will use in making your case.

EVIDENCE	RULES/SUPPORT/WARRANTS
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	

Checklist for Revisions:

1. Have you described what was found at the scene and what the autopsy revealed?
2. Have you incorporated at least three pieces of evidence?
3. Have you provided the rules or warrants that explain why the evidence is important to your claim?
4. Have you made a recommendation about what should happen next or what more evidence is needed?

Adapted from *Teaching Argument Writing* by George Hillocks, Jr.