Ludwig, Rudolph

Ludwig: *Sees Rudolph}* Hallo! Who's this. *{Aside}* Why, it is the Grand Duke!

Rudolph: *{sobbing}* Who are you sir, who presume to address me in person? If you've anything to communicate, you must fling yourself at the feet of my Acting-Temporary Sub-Deputy Assistant Vice-Chamberlain, who will fling himself at the feet of his immediate superior, and so on, with successive foot-flingings through the various grades – your communication will, in course of time, come to my august knowledge.

Ludwig: Your Highness, in me you see the most unhappy, the most unfortunate, the most completely miserable man in your whole dominion –

Rudolph: *{still sobbing}* You the most miserable man in my whole dominion! How can you have the face to stand there and say such a thing? Why, look at me! Look at me! *{Bursts into tears}*

Ludwig: Well, I wouldn't be a cry-baby.

Rudolph: A cry-baby? If you had just been told that you were going to be deposed tomorrow, and perhaps blown up with dynamite for all I know, wouldn't you be a cry-baby? I do declare, if I could only hit upon some cheap and painless method of putting an end to an existence which has become insupportable, I would unhesitatingly adopt it!

Ludwig: You would? *{Aside}* I see a magnificent way out of this! By Jupiter, I'll try it! *{Aloud}* If you are really in earnest – if you really desire to escape scot free from this impending, unspeakably horrible catastrophe – without trouble, danger, pain or expense – why not resort to a Statutory Duel?

Rudolph: A Statutory Duel?

Ludwig: Yes. The Act is still in force, but it will expire tomorrow afternoon. You fight – you lose – you are dead for a day. The victor assumes your office, but just for a day. Tomorrow, when the Act expires, you come to life again and resume your Grand Duchy as though nothing had happened. In the meantime, the explosion will have taken place and the survivor will have had to bear the brunt of it.

Rudolph: Yes, that's all very well, but who'll be fool enough to be the survivor?