

Paquette explains why she became a courtesan from *Candide* by Voltaire

Paquette: I was very innocent when you knew me. I was obliged to leave the castle short after you were. If a famous doctor had not taken pity on me I should have died. For some time I was the doctor's mistress from gratitude to him. His wife, who was madly jealous, beat me everyday. One day, exasperated by his wife's behavior, he gave her some medicine for a little cold and it was so efficacious that she died two hours afterward in horrible convulsions. The lady's relatives brought a criminal prosecution against the husband; he fled and I was put in prison. The judge set me free on condition that he take the doctor's place. So I was obliged to continue the abominable occupation which to you men seems so amusing and which to us is nothing but an abyss of misery. I came to Venice to practice this profession. Sir if you could imagine what it is to be forced to caress impartially an old tradesman, lawyer, monk, gondolier; to be exposed to every insult and outrage, to be reduced often to borrow a petticoat in order to go and find some disgusting man who will lift it. To be despoiled by the police, and contemplate for the future nothing but old age, a hospital and dunghill, you would conclude that I am one of the most unfortunate creatures in the world.