

Lysistrata

An ancient Greek Comedy by Aristophanes from 411 BC.

This play is a comic account of a woman's mission to end the Peloponnesian War by denying their men sex until they stopped going to war. Lysistrata persuades the women of the warring cities to take over the Acropolis and to withhold sexual privileges from their husbands and lovers as a means of forcing the men to negotiate peace.

This excerpt that Kirsten read at the start of our online conversation is as insightful today as it was then of a collaborative approach that women bring to the table when they are able to come together on their own terms:

MAGISTRATE

All right, all right! So, how will you... women, be able to put an end to all this terrible turbulence amongst all the nations? How would you undo it all?

LYSISTRATA With great ease!

We shall undo all this turbulence just like we undo the knots in a ball of wool. We simply pick up the spindles and we pull one thread this way, another that way, another this way, another... Simple! That's how we'll get rid of all the knots. We'll send out some embassies here, some embassies there...

MAGISTRATE

Fools! You think you can stop such great problems with spindles and wool?

LYSISTRATA

Sure! You simply wash the city just like you wash wool.

First, you put the wool into the tub and get rid of all the daggy bits, ... Then you put it on a bed, take a rod and scratch all the burrs and spikes out it. All those burrs and spikes that have gathered themselves into tight knots and balls and are tearing and tangling the wool of State, well, you just tease them out of there. Rip their heads off! Then, off for the combing. You put all the wool together into one basket. All of it! Friends, foreign or local, allies - anyone who's good for the State. Drop them all in there. Consider them, too, as part of the same ball of wool, only separated from each other. So, what with all those joining the ball, you'll be able to weave a cloak big enough for the whole city.