



SHOWTIME

[the poem also known as SHOWSTOPPER]

KOLEKA PUTUMA

it has become a freak show
backspace
it has become a strip show
backspace
it has become a show
showing up here
callous bone and no skin

it has become hazardous
running vulnerable and unarmed
[like this]

it has become surgery
spilling here

it has become ritual
standing here
splitting insides open for you
to grab to microscope
to pick to poke
to make sacrificial
to make Venus
to make Krotoa
to make Eunice Waymon
to make Anaracha
to make Bometa
to make Heed
to make Jadine
to make Sula
to make Pecola
to make Sorrow

to make Beloved
to make token

it has become a cult
this obsession with dead or dancing
[you know what]

it has become witchcraft
this scientific experiment
where [y]
does [x] on [you know who]

it has become spectacle
this anthropological [you know what]
this QnA
this gathering
where [you know who] shows up
and takes all the seats
and all the photographs
and asks all the questions
and hogs all the microphones
and cries all the tears
and strangles all the air

it has become old and familiar
this performance
this cycle
where you take take take
take take take take take take
take take take take take take
take take take take take take

backspace

steal.

Koleka Putuma is an award-winning poet, playwright and theatre director. Her bestselling debut collection of poems *Collective Amnesia* has sold over 5000 copies and is in its 10th print run. It has been prescribed for study at tertiary level in South African Universities and Gothenburg University in Sweden. It was awarded the 2018 Glenna Luschei Prize for African Poetry. The collection was also named 2017 book of the year by the City Press and one of the best books of 2017 by The Sunday Times and Quartz Africa. Putuma was recently shortlisted as one of four finalists for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative for theatre. She is a Forbes Africa Under 30 Honoree, recipient of the Imbewu Trust Scribe Playwriting Award, Mbokodo Rising Light award, CASA playwriting award and the 2019 Distell Playwriting Award for her play *No Easter Sunday for Queers*. Her other plays include *Mbuzeni*, *Woza Sarafina*, *Uhm*, *Ekhaya* (theatre for 3 – 7-year olds) and *SCOOP: Kitchen play for carers and babes*, the first South African play for 0 – 12-month babies.

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