



# SHOWTIME

## [the poem also known as SHOWSTOPPER]

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### 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.

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*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.