

I Want to Go Back

(excerpted from the young adult novel *K My Name Is Kendra*)
by Kamichi Jackson

I want to go back to when my life was about jumping double-dutch in the middle of the parking lot, buying bomb pops from the ice cream truck with the wack music, plotting against the older kids because they ran us younger kids out of the Big Playground, and racing to be home by the time Mama stopped calling our names from the back porch or else. I want to go back. I'm afraid to close my eyes when I go to bed now. I can't get Uncle C.J.'s face out of my head, no matter how hard I try. I keep smelling him. I keep feeling his hand over my mouth and his hot breath in my ear. I keep hearing those words—those nasty words no grown man is supposed to say to a fifteen-year-old girl, especially when that girl is his niece. Those words that keep circling around and around and around in my head. I want them out. I want them out, but I can't get them out, no matter how hard I try. I don't want to feel anymore. I don't want to remember anymore. I don't want to cry anymore. I want to die.

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