

## **Agoraphobia – Nellie Lear**

April walked around the apartment. Bored. She walked up the wooden stairs and down the stairs. She picked at the old paint on the wall. She repainted the wall. She cooked pasta. She ate pasta. She washed dishes. She dried dishes. She looked outside her window. She stared. She watched as taxis went by. As people rushed off to work in a hurry. With all this movement she still stayed still.

April has never left her apartment. Agoraphobia. The fear of going outside. She has never felt the spiky grass on her feet. Never felt the warmth of the sun on her olive skin. Only the wooden boards on her feet and the cold light on her face.

"Day 234", she says out loud. She pulls on her faded blue sweater. She puts her brown hair in a low ponytail. She laces up her purple sneakers that she got 2 years ago but still looks like they are new. She looks at her door.

The thing about April is she wants to go outside. She wants to feel the ocean's cold water on her knees. She wants to feel the rough bark on her finger tips. The only thing stopping her. Danger. The spiky grass could hide bees getting ready to sting. The sun could turn her olive skin into the colour of a red apple. The ocean has sharks lurking in the depths. The tree's bark hides deadly spiders with enough poison to kill 5 horses. But the worst thing of all, people.

People stare. They judge. They whisper behind your back. What if she falls and everyone laughs? What if she is followed and kidnapped? What if someone steals her handbag? What if people think she is weird? What if she is too slow at putting her change in her bag and everyone is waiting for her to leave the store?

She grabs onto the cold metal door knob. This is the easy part but still hard. She takes a quick deep breath and opens the door. She looks at the stairs that lead to the exit. She slowly takes the hand rail and walks down. The dim light creates shadows on the wall.

Each step creaks as she puts her weight on the wooden boards. She stops as she steps on the last step. Her hands tremble as she reaches for the wooden door knob. This is where she always fails.

Her heart beats fast. Her hand is sweating. Her legs shake. Her mind races, she has never gotten this far before. Her eyes are fixed on the door. As her finger touches the door knob she pulls away. She goes again and again until she is somehow out of breath.

She reaches again one last time. She grabs onto the knob tightening her grip. She pulls open the door. Wind floods in and the sun is blinding to her eyes. She tries to step out but her feet run back. She gets up the stairs, into her apartment and onto her bed.

"Maybe next time," she says.