

## Personal Dramas

Lei has been feeling more self-conscious than ever before. It seems that other students are whispering about her or watching as she walks to school or to the shop. Why are people always looking at her? Are her clothes dirty? Is her hair a mess? It's as if she were from the moon or something. Sometimes it makes her really mad but other times she just doesn't care.

Paul has always been a bit shorter than his friends, but suddenly things are different. As if overnight, everyone seems to have grown taller. Now he has to tilt his head up to look at his best friend! Girls in his neighborhood are even taller than the boys and they don't want to talk to him anymore. He used to have fun playing football with the other boys but now they are too fast. Will he ever grow up?

Nate's parents have become very demanding lately. They always complain to him about the clothes he wears, who he spends time with, and how late he stays out at night. Last week he had a big argument with his parents and they locked him in the house for the night. Why are they trying to run his life? They can hardly take care of themselves. His father nearly lost his job last week! At least Nate has good friends.

Amaya's grandmother just gave her a beautiful scarf. "Maybe you'll wear it at your wedding," Grandma had said with a smile. Amaya was happy but confused. Who can think about marriage? Amaya can't even think about next week! Maybe she'll marry one day but what about university or a career? She can't decide. It's too far away. Right now she has to help around the house and care for her younger sisters.

Ismailia lives with her mother, aunt, grandfather, and two younger brothers. It used to be difficult to get her brothers to do their chores or schoolwork, but now they listen to Ismailia when she gives them directions. When her brothers are at school, Ismailia helps her mother and aunt wash the clothes they take in for their laundry business. After helping with dinner, she might visit with friends. On weekends, she spends time with her new boyfriend.

Adolph had a great idea last night. He could offer to repair the fence at the orphanage. Maybe they would ask him to do other work. It might even turn into a regular job since they also have a school and community center. His girlfriend, Louisa, would be pleased. With the extra money, they could begin saving for their future. Louisa's more mature than his other girlfriends were. It makes Adolph proud to be with someone who is so sensible.

Ralph has been feeling confused and anxious lately. For a while he thought Sami really liked him, but today she didn't even say hello! Well, maybe he doesn't like her so much either! Besides this, his mother has been pressuring him to stay in school while his uncle wants him to help out at the motorcycle repair shop. Meanwhile he could be hanging out with his friends! How did life become so complicated? And what's the purpose of it all?

Lana used to respect her father, but when she came home past midnight after being out with her boyfriend, Lana's father was really angry. He yelled a lot and even hit her. Lana got so upset she hasn't spoken to him since! Why shouldn't she be able to spend time with her boyfriend? At least he's someone who cares about her. She never felt like she was good enough for anyone before. All Lana's friends tell her it's a good match, too. And they certainly know him better than her father does!