

= Wandering Son =

Wandering Son (????? , H?r? Musuko) is a Japanese manga series written and illustrated by Takako Shimura . It was originally serialized in Comic Beam from the December 2002 to August 2013 issue , and published in 15 tank?bon volumes by Enterbrain from July 2003 to August 2013 . The series is licensed in English by Fantagraphics Books , which released the first volume in North America in July 2011 . A 12 @-@ episode anime adaptation produced by AIC Classic and directed by Ei Aoki aired in Japan between January and March 2011 . Eleven episodes aired on television , with episodes 10 and 11 edited into a single episode , and were released individually on their respective BD / DVD volumes .

The story depicts a young student named Shuichi Nitori , described by the author as a boy who wants to be a girl , and Shuichi 's friend Yoshino Takatsuki , described as a girl who wants to be a boy . The series deals with issues such as transsexualism , gender identity , and the beginning of puberty . Shimura was originally going to write the story about a girl in high school who wants to be a boy , but she realized that a boy who wants to become a girl before entering into puberty would have a lot of worries related to growing up , and changed the story to fit this model . Wandering Son was selected as a recommended work by the awards jury of the tenth Japan Media Arts Festival in 2006 . The series has been lauded for its use of gender reversal as the core of the story , though the emotional realism of the young characters has been called into question .

= = Plot = =

At the start of Wandering Son , Shuichi Nitori is a young , feminine child assigned male at birth (AMAB) in the fifth grade who transfers into a new school . Shuichi quickly becomes friends with another student , tall , boyish Yoshino Takatsuki . Yoshino soon learns of Shuichi 's desire to be a girl . In a show of friendship , Yoshino confesses a similar desire to be a boy . Shuichi also becomes friends with Saori Chiba and Kanako Sasa , two other girls in the class . Saori instantly takes a liking to Shuichi and continuously encourages Shuichi to wear feminine clothes . After Shuichi , Yoshino , and their friends enter sixth grade , Shuichi meets Makoto Ariga , another AMAB student their age from another class who also secretly wants to be a girl . Shuichi and Yoshino become friends with an adult transsexual woman named Yuki who is living with a man named Shiina . Shuichi 's older sister Maho becomes a model and eventually becomes friends with Maiko , a teen model whom she idolizes , and two other teen models : Tamaki Sat? and Anna Suehiro . Maho gets a boyfriend , Riku Seya , and Shuichi confesses a crush on Yoshino , but Yoshino cannot reciprocate Shuichi 's feelings . After Saori learns of this , she confesses she likes Shuichi , but Shuichi too cannot return her feelings . This results in a falling @-@ out between Shuichi 's friends as they prepare to enter junior high school .

In junior high school , they meet a tall , eccentric girl who befriends everyone named Chizuru Sarashina and her prickly friend Momoko Shirai , who does not get along well with the others ? especially Saori . Eventually , Saori and Yoshino rejoin Shuichi 's group of friends , though Saori says she still hates Yoshino and Momoko . Shuichi and Anna start dating , much to the surprise of their friends and Shuichi 's sister . Yoshino and Saori manage to halfway repair their friendship , though Saori is still standoffish to others . Shuichi 's friends are split up into several classes upon entering their second year in junior high school . Shuichi becomes friends with Shinpei Doi , who previously teased Shuichi about wanting to be a girl . Yoshino attends school in a boy 's uniform for a short time , and Shuichi tries to go to school dressed as a girl one day , but is laughed at , and becomes discouraged . Shuichi 's friends worry as Shuichi begins skipping school . Although Shuichi eventually starts attending school regularly again , Anna breaks off their relationship . By the time Shuichi , Yoshino , and their friends enter their third year in junior high school , Shuichi 's voice is changing . The group of friends start thinking about their future high school plans , and Shuichi and Anna start dating again .

Shuichi begins attending the same all @-@ boy high school as Makoto and Doi , while Yoshino and Saori begin attending a high school where uniforms are not required . Saori starts dating Fumiya

Ninomiya . Yoshino starts working at Anna 's modeling agency and Shuichi begins working at a cafe , but later quits . Shuichi starts writing a semi @-@ autobiographical novel . Yoshino later tells Shuichi that Yoshino does not think about wanting to be a boy anymore , and also confesses a romantic attraction to Shuichi . Shuichi still identifies as a girl , and even after informing Anna of this , she stays with Shuichi . After graduating from high school , Shuichi moves out and goes to the same college as Doi . Shuichi continues to write the novel , which is given the title The Boy Who 's a Girl (??? ? ????? , Boku wa , Onna no Ko) .

= = Characters = =

= = = Protagonists = = =

Shuichi Nitori (?? ?? , Nitori Sh?ichi)

Voiced by : K?suke Hatakeyama

Shuichi , one of two protagonists , is a young , effeminate child who at the beginning of Wandering Son is in the fifth grade of elementary school . Otherwise known by the nicknames Shu (??? , Sh?) and Nitorin (?????) , Shuichi was assigned male at birth , but wants to be a girl and often cross @-@ dresses to assume the role of the female gender . Shuichi is described as cute by many of the other characters and is able to appear as a girl when cross @-@ dressing , because of a feminine @-@ looking face and physical build . Shuichi enjoys wearing cute clothes ; although initially not a cross @-@ dresser , Shuichi 's friends Yoshino Takatsuki and Saori Chiba encourage Shuichi to dress and act femininely . As Shuichi grows up , puberty becomes a topic of increasing concern , such as the growth of body hair , a deepening voice , and the onset of pimples . Shuichi exhibits signs of gender dysphoria and displays an outward attraction to two girls in the series ? Yoshino and Anna Suehiro . Shuichi and Anna date for a time in junior high , until she breaks off their relationship . However , the two soon resume their relationship with each other .

Shuichi is interested in doing indoor activities , and does not partake in activities favored by boys of the same age , such as playing sports . Shuichi enjoys and is skillful in baking sweet foods , though is never shown cooking other , more conventional foods . After starting an exchange diary with Yoshino , Shuichi becomes interested in writing stories , and even joins the drama club as a writer with Saori in junior high school after they co @-@ write a rendition of Romeo and Juliet performed by members of their class . Shuichi has an honest personality , and easily gets along with others . As a child , Shuichi has an obedient , dutiful attitude . However , upon entering puberty , Shuichi sometimes experiences outbursts of intense emotion . Shuichi can be overly sensitive at times and is often shown crying in front of others . Due to these personality quirks , it is easier for Shuichi to associate with girls of the same age . Accordingly , Shuichi has few male friends .

Yoshino Takatsuki (?? ??? , Takatsuki Yoshino)

Voiced by : Asami Seto

Yoshino , the other protagonist , is a tall , masculine child who at the beginning of Wandering Son is a fifth grader in Shuichi 's class . Otherwise known as Takatsuki @-@ kun (?????) by their classmates , with an honorific used mainly with boys , Yoshino was assigned female at birth , but wants to be a boy . Yoshino usually refrains from dressing in traditionally feminine clothes , such as skirts or dresses . Despite this , Yoshino 's mother insists on buying such clothes for Yoshino . Shortly after becoming friends with Shuichi , Yoshino gets a haircut in a boyish style , taking on the appearance of a boy their age , especially when Yoshino is dressed in a male school uniform . Like Shuichi , Yoshino becomes increasingly concerned and resentful about undergoing puberty , such as at the beginning of menstruation or the growth of breasts . Yoshino goes to buy a chest @-@ flattening garment to escape the necessity of wearing a bra . Also like Shuichi , Yoshino shows signs indicating gender dysphoria , though later stops thinking that way due to personal exposure to modeling .

Yoshino prefers to dress and act like a boy , but usually abstains from anything which would draw attention , such as going to school in a male uniform after entering junior high . However , Yoshino

does on occasion dress in a male school uniform and go to neighboring cities while dressed as a boy ; during one such time , Yoshino enjoys being hit on by an older woman . Yoshino wants to look " cool " and wears clothes which are not girlish . When teased by others , Yoshino is prone to getting emotional and is known to get violent on occasion . Yoshino takes up an interest in basketball after entering junior high school and joins the female basketball team with Chizuru Sarashina . In junior high , Yoshino decides not to get a haircut after a comment by Saori , but later cuts it back to a short , boyish style . Yoshino 's family consists of a father , mother , older brother , and older sister .

= = = Classmates = = =

Saori Chiba (山手 紗織 , Chiba Saori)

Voiced by : Yuuka Nanri

Saori , nicknamed Saorin (サリン) , is a girl who is a fifth grader in Shuichi 's class at the beginning of Wandering Son . She takes an interest in encouraging Shuichi to cross @-@ dress , even going so far as to buy Shuichi an expensive dress for Shuichi 's birthday , which Shuichi later returns , much to her displeasure . Saori finds it difficult to associate with others ; she has few friends , though becomes close to Shuichi . She tends to convey what is on her mind and disregards how others may take what she says . As Saori grows up , she gradually becomes more standoffish and stoic ; she even has bad relations with her teachers . Despite her self @-@ centered attitude , she remains popular among her male classmates due to her physical attractiveness . She is a sensitive girl whose temper sometimes gets the better of her when reprimanding bullies that tease Shuichi , because of Shuichi 's femininity and cross @-@ dressing . Saori is often emotionally affected by circumstances involving Shuichi , because of her feelings for Shuichi . Saori converts to Christianity partly because of this influence to seek forgiveness for her previous actions , though she only attends mass when feeling guilty about her behavior .

Kanako Sasa (笹 菜香子 , Sasa Kanako)

Voiced by : Yoshino Nanjō

Kanako Sasa , usually referred to by her surname , is a girl who is a fifth grader in Shuichi 's class at the beginning of Wandering Son . She is sometimes called Kanabun (カナブン , lit. drone beetle) by her younger brother and Chizuru . She makes her first appearance in chapter two of the manga , but is not named until volume two . She is a short , energetic girl who thinks of herself as everyone 's friend and becomes distressed when her friends fight among themselves . Sasa acts as a mediator between her friends in such times and tries not to leave anyone alone . She has been friends with Yoshino since pre @-@ school , and later becomes close with Chizuru . Sasa is an innocent , childish girl who does not have many worries aside from her friends ' quarrels . She tends to be a handful for her mother , who picks out her clothes for her and even helps her get ready for school in the morning . She mentions that if she thinks too hard about something , her brain becomes itchy .

Makoto Ariga (荒井 誠 , Ariga Makoto)

Voiced by : Yūichi Iguchi

Makoto first appears when the cast is in sixth grade , though is in a different class . Known as Mako for short , though mostly only to Shuichi , Makoto was also assigned male at birth , but wishes to be a girl and shares Shuichi 's interest in cross @-@ dressing ; it is this that spurs Makoto to become Shuichi 's closest friend . Due to facial freckles and round glasses , Makoto is not able to appear as cute as Shuichi when wearing feminine clothes . Makoto 's primary reason for wanting to be a girl may be due to an attraction to men , something Shuichi cannot relate to ; Makoto is a romantic who wants to be in a relationship with a cool , adult man . Makoto is unusually mature and is able to think calmly and objectively while providing advice to friends . Makoto also gets along well with boys and girls of the same age , because of good listening skills ; Makoto often becomes an onlooker to what is going on in other characters ' lives . Makoto is an only child whose parents run a bakery .

Chizuru Sarashina (紗沙菜 智子 , Sarashina Chizuru)

Voiced by : Saeko Chiba

Chizuru , nicknamed Chii @-@ chan , is a tall girl who first appears as a classmate of Shuichi when they both enter junior high school . She is Momoko 's childhood friend , and has a stylish demeanor ,

highlighted by her stature and long hair , which captivates both Shuichi and Yoshino when they first meet her . Chizuru is described as a free spirit , someone who enjoys doing unconventional , often outrageous things which surprise those around her ; she frequently acts without thinking , and as a result projects a childish personality . Her impulsive behavior sometimes gets her in trouble with other characters , but she quickly becomes ashamed when she realizes the consequences . She tries to be everyone 's friend , though Saori strongly dislikes her impulsiveness . Chizuru joins the girl 's basketball team in junior high . Her family runs a soba restaurant .

Momoko Shirai (三好 摩子 , Shirai Momoko)

Voiced by : Aki Toyosaki

Momoko is a childhood friend and classmate in junior high school of Chizuru ; she is nicknamed Momo . She constantly hangs around Chizuru and is visibly annoyed when Chizuru socializes with others , or even if someone simply sits too close to her . Momoko inevitably starts fighting Saori , who does not particularly respect Chizuru , when they talk .

= = = Others = = =

Maho Nitori (成田 真帆 , Nitori Maho)

Voiced by : Nana Mizuki

Maho is Shuichi 's sister . She is one year older than Shuichi is , and at the beginning of Wandering Son , she is in the sixth grade of elementary school . Maho shows a strong interest in clothes , and spends much of her money on new apparel . She is a big fan of a teen fashion model named Maiko , and to meet her , Maho auditions for the same modeling agency as Maiko . After she is hired and becomes recognized as a model , Maho enjoys being asked her autograph by complete strangers . While her modeling career initially starts out slowly , Maho soon gains confidence in her abilities , and becomes friends with Maiko and two other models , Anna Suehiro and Tamaki Sat? . In contrast to her younger sibling , Maho is very out @-@ spoken and tends to be rough with Shuichi , even hitting or slapping Shuichi on occasion , and she often forces things on Shuichi with little consideration of Shuichi 's opinion . She does not like Shuichi 's cross @-@ dressing and gets angry and disturbed when she finds Shuichi dressed as a girl . In junior high school , Maho becomes attracted to her classmate Riku Seya , and eventually starts dating him .

Riku Seya (瀬谷 莉久 , Seya Riku)

Voiced by : Yoshitsugu Matsuoka

Riku Seya , usually referred to by his surname , is a classmate of Maho 's who meets her when they enter junior high school . He is generally a soft @-@ spoken boy who initially takes an interest in Shuichi , whom he believes to be a girl , when they first meet . When he learns that Shuichi is assigned male , Seya becomes angry at Maho for hiding this and stringing him along , but he soon reconciles with her and eventually starts dating her . Seya remains polite with Shuichi , though due to their initial meeting , there is always some awkwardness between the two .

Anna Suehiro (末廣 杏 , Suehiro Anna)

Voiced by : Yui Horie

Anna is a teen model who is a good friend of Maiko and goes to the same all @-@ girl school as her ; she is similarly well @-@ known and experienced in modeling . She is considered outspoken and sharp @-@ tongued by other models . Anna at first disapproves of Shuichi dressing as a girl , and even calls Shuichi a freak soon after meeting Shuichi . Anna initially tells Maho she has no interest in her " weak " sibling because of Shuichi 's femininity , though later dates Shuichi for a time after Shuichi asks her out , until she breaks up with Shuichi . However , the two soon resume their relationship with each other . Furthermore , Anna 's opinion of Shuichi presenting as female also changes , she saying that it actually suits Shuichi , and the two even go out together on a date with Shuichi dressed as a girl . She feels Shuichi is an interesting person , and once says Shuichi is like a cute little sister . Anna spends a lot of money on clothes , and enjoys modifying them .

HiroYuki Yoshida (吉田 ヒロユキ) / Yuki (雪)

Voiced by : Takako Honda

HiroYuki , usually referred to as Yuki , is a tall and attractive trans woman living with her boyfriend

Shiina . Yuki takes an early interest in Yoshino when she believes Yoshino to be a boy , though remains on good terms with Yoshino even after learning of Yoshino 's assigned sex , and gives Shuichi and Yoshino helpful advice when they are troubled . Despite the differences between their situations , Yuki sees a lot of herself in Shuichi : when they were growing up , Shiina was the only friend who stood by the young Hiroyuki , as she was called then , while girls teased her and the boys bullied her to change . Yuki always keeps up a positive attitude , and runs a gay bar . Since her transition , she has not been on good terms with her parents , who run a uniform store .

Yuki is the main character of Takako Shimura 's short story " Hana " (?) , in the collection Boku wa , Onna no Ko (??? ? ?????) , in which her family ? which consists of her father , mother , brother , and sister @-@ in @-@ law ? also appears ; Yuki is revealed to be a fan of Keiji Sada , a Sh?wa period actor .

Shiina (??)

Voiced by : Keiji Fujiwara

Shiina , given name unknown , otherwise referred to by his nickname Shii (??) , is another adult friend of Shuichi and Yoshino . He was Yuki 's classmate in elementary school , and he eventually became her boyfriend after her transition . Unlike Yuki , Shiina had many friends in school . He generally just watches over Shuichi and Yoshino with Yuki , but he sometimes does bold and unexpected things , such as grabbing Yoshino 's crotch when he first meets Yoshino because he feared that , because Yoshino was dressed as a boy at the time , Yuki might be having an illicit affair with Yoshino .

Fumiya Ninomiya (?? ?? , Ninomiya Fumiya)

Voiced by : Kaoru Mizuhara

Fumiya is a talkative boy one year older than Saori whom she meets when she starts going to church . Saori is easily annoyed by him , especially when he brings her flowers from his parents ' flower shop . He takes an early interest in Saori and tries to become her boyfriend . After meeting Shuichi , Fumiya becomes jealous of Saori 's interest in Shuichi , and finds Shuichi 's cross @-@ dressing gross . While initially lying to Saori and Shuichi about having an interest in cross @-@ dressing , he is later seen dressed as a girl while out with Shuichi , and again at the cultural festival at Shuichi 's school . Fumiya enjoys the added attention that comes from cross @-@ dressing and admits that he likes being called cute .

= = Production = =

In an interview in August 2003 , Takako Shimura stated that the theme of Wandering Son is similar to the second half of her previous manga series Shikii no J?nin . Shimura took the junior high school teacher Kentar? Kaneda from Shikii no J?nin and inserted him into Wandering Son , where he teaches at Shuichi 's junior high school , because she really liked his character . Shimura originally planned to use a female high school student who wants to become a boy as the main character . However , she realized that a boy who wants to become a girl before entering into puberty would have many worries related to growing up , and changed the story accordingly . Shimura used her realization that the boy would go through significant changes as he grew up to deepen the development of the story and characters . The Japanese title , H?r? Musuko , is a pun on h?t? musuko (?????) , meaning " prodigal son " .

Shimura mainly found her characters ' names by looking through name dictionaries , although she also took the names of acquaintances and slightly changed them , and even used train station names for side characters appearing only once . Out of all the characters , Shimura is most pleased with Kanako Sasa . For the designs of clothes for the female characters , Shimura consulted various fashion magazines for girls in their early teens , especially Nicola . Shimura commented self @-@ deprecatingly in the afterword of volume one that , like her other series , her characters do not look very different from each other , her panels are too white , and there is much pathos .

= = Media = =

== Manga ==

The manga *Wandering Son* is written and illustrated by Takako Shimura . It was serialized in the monthly seinen (aimed at younger adult men) manga magazine *Comic Beam* from the December 2002 to August 2013 issue . The individual chapters were collected and published in 15 tank?bon volumes by Enterbrain from July 25 , 2003 to August 28 , 2013 . *Wandering Son* was one of several manga titles included with the launch in December 2009 of the manga distribution service of the PlayStation Store for the Japanese PlayStation Portable handheld game console .

The series is licensed in English by Fantagraphics Books , which began releasing the series in North America in hardcover format starting with the first volume on July 5 , 2011 . Gary Groth of Fantagraphics Books said in an interview he licensed *Wandering Son* because " it 's not a typical choice for a manga title published in the U.S. and it 's not typical subject matter for comics in general , " saying that the subject is " perfectly legitimate ... for literature ? or comics . " The series is also licensed by Ever Glory Publishing in Taiwan and by Haksan Culture Company in Korea .

== Anime ==

A 12 @-@ episode anime TV series adaptation produced by AIC Classic and Aniplex aired in Japan between January 13 and March 31 , 2011 on Fuji TV 's NoitaminA programming block . Crunchyroll simulcasted the anime on their streaming website . Aniplex released the anime on six Blu @-@ ray and DVD compilation volumes in Japan between April 27 and September 21 , 2011 . Of the 11 episodes to be aired on TV , episodes 10 and 11 were edited into a single episode , and were released individually on their respective BD / DVD volumes . The anime adapts the story from the point where the characters enter junior high school . Following the arrest of Ai Takabe , the voice actress who played Maiko , for drug possession in October 2015 , Bandai Channel removed the series from its streaming catalog .

The anime is directed by Ei Aoki and the screenplay was written by Mari Okada . Chief animator Ry?ichi Makino based the character design used in the anime on Takako Shimura 's original concept and the main animator is Michio Sat? . The music was produced by Satoru Kosaki and Keiichi Okabe , both from Monaca , and the sound director is Jin Aketagawa . The anime 's opening theme song is " Itsudatte . " (????? ?) by Daisuke and the single was released on March 2 , 2011 . The ending theme is " For You " by Rie fu and the single was released on February 16 , 2011 . The original soundtrack was released on August 24 , 2011 .

== Reception ==

It was reported in June 2013 that approximately 1 @.@ 05 million copies of the manga are in print in Japan . *Wandering Son* was selected as a recommended work by the awards jury of the tenth Japan Media Arts Festival in 2006 . The Young Adult Library Services Association nominated *Wandering Son* for its 2012 Great Graphic Novels for Teens list . The anime was awarded the honorable mention prize for technical achievement in broadcast animation at the 65th Motion Picture and Television Engineering Society of Japan Awards in 2012 .

In a review of the first volume by Rebecca Silverman of Anime News Network (ANN) , she praised the slow pace of the storytelling , which " gives it a more realistic feel . " Silverman praises Takako Shimura for making Shuichi into a " human protagonist " , but notes that " most of the children act much older than they are . " The second volume was featured in ANN 's Right Turn Only column in March 2007 as the Import of the Month , where Carlo Santos lauded the series for using gender reversal as the " actual heart of the story " in contrast to " every other series " involving cross @-@ dressing , which use " gender reversal as a goofy plot device . " The art was praised as " simple [with] few lines , but incredibly expressive " which Santos claimed is a " style that 's the most difficult and beautiful of all . " Santos criticized the " emotional realism " of the work for having the young characters ' " unrealistically mature attitude " towards " issues above their grade level . "

Matt Thorn , the English translator of the manga , wrote that fans of Anne of Green Gables or The Rose of Versailles would also enjoy Wandering Son , and Silverman compared Wandering Son to Mizuiro Jidai . Thorn described the art as " clean and lovely " and went on to cite Wandering Son as " sweet , thought @-@ provoking , funny , and moving , and I think it will resonate with readers regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation . " The first manga volume as translated by Fantagraphics Books had an early debut at the May 2011 Toronto Comic Arts Festival and sold out within the first two hours of the event .