



Wandering Son, Vol. 4

Takako Shimura, Matt Thorn (Translator)

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Wandering Son has garnered extensive praise (from the GLBT community, from manga fans, and from comics fans in general) for its uniquely funny, warm, and sensitive treatment of the travails of two Japanese tweens who find themselves coping with the knotty issue of gender identification, as they slowly realize that maybe they aren't who they were meant to be.

In this latest volume, love is in the air. It's in the trees and on the streets. It's hanging on the walls and piled in great heaps on the floor. Or is it really love? These sixth and seventh graders don't really know. But something is definitely amiss. They can't sleep, and when they do sleep they have strange dreams. They get angry and cry, they blush and grin like idiots, for no reason. And it isn't even spring. But the standard rules apply: If A is in love with B, B is certain to be in love with C, and C is likely to be in love with D, or possibly A. And now it seems a good third of the alphabet is in love with our shy hero(ine), Nitori-kun.

But the flip-side of love is jealousy, and hate. The simple friendships of childhood develop into the complex, tense relationships of adolescence. Friends become strangers, or worse. But while everyone seems to have caught the bug, Volume 4 revolves solidly around the triangle of Nitori-kun, Takatsukisan, and Chiba-san. Yet centrifugal force seems to push the three away from each other, and there is a certain grimness as they say goodbye to elementary school, and put on the (highly gendered) uniforms of junior high school.

Wandering Son, Vol. 4 Details

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From Reader Review Wandering Son, Vol. 4 for online ebook

Stewart Tame says

As always, the tone of this series fascinates me. Hearing the capsule description, "A junior high school cross dresser struggles with his sexual identity," one pictures either angst-ridden drama or madcap farce. But *Wandering Son* takes neither approach, framing everything in a matter-of-fact approach that's almost mundane. Yes, there are tears, and, yes, there is laughter. But Shimura Takako somehow makes it all seem perfectly ordinary and straightforward.

Rob McMonigal says

This is really starting to lose the thread. The volume basically took a ton of time to get to a moment of admission for Shu and Maho regarding their feelings for other characters in the book. The art style also takes a step backward here, as I once again started having trouble telling people apart. The school cruelty sections don't really add anything new, either.

I'll give this one more volume, but at the moment, it's looking like something I can pass on.

Sarah Schanze says

This volume started getting into the "who likes who" drama which is my bread and butter because I have no shame. Looking forward to the rest!

Austin Gullett says

This volume is all about navigating personal relationships and choosing whether to act on or express feelings. Love, of course, but also jealousy and anger and excitement. The earnestness of the characters is still the biggest strength of the series. I hate to see them all fighting. There's also a little consideration of sexuality in this volume: the characters consider who they are attracted to and how and why.

Sarah Sammis says

Whatever trouble I was having telling characters apart in Volume 3, didn't happen here. Maybe I was less distracted. Maybe it was my glasses (I wasn't wearing them with volume 3). Maybe there's a maturity in the artwork?

<http://pussreboots.com/blog/2018/comm...>

Chris says

I like it still, but I'm sad that the characters are having problems with each other.

taz says

People are complaining about the characters being "overdramatic." Have you all forgotten what you were like in elementary and middle school?

David Basora says

In this volume, we're thankfully given a reprieve from the creepy older couple of volume three, while our middle schoolers start to deal with feelings about each other. I still believe that this series has the characters dealings with things well above their age level, this volume felt more appropriate with the juvenile gossip, crushes, and grudges among friends that occur in middle school. I was, however, disappointed by the blatant manipulation of perspectives given in this volume. The early spotlight on Maho was nice, since she was becoming rather one-dimensional, and Saori's conflict was a good thing to explore, but I feel like we hardly spent any time with Yoshino in this book, who is supposed to be one of the two main characters. Since Shuichi is so heavily focused in this book, then I would expect volume five to follow Yoshino more, but the cliffhangers at the end of this still seem to focus on Shu. So I don't know what to expect, but I still enjoy reading these for the curiously calming effect following these mundane relationships gives me, while also challenging me to understand circumstances I will never face.

Courtney says

Very cute. At times I had to roll my eyes at the little stories he made up or the love triangle-y stuff, but then I stopped myself and reflected back onto my time in elementary school...similar things happened. I very much look forward to the next volume, and hopefully the return of Yuki-san :)

Robyn says

No Yuki! Maybe the author got criticism and is rethinking the character. Guess I'll keep reading; cute and relatable series.

Blurb on the back seems to be for a future volume, weirdly.

Nick Jones says

I really don't understand this series. It's very much about the subjective emotional states of the characters, and as a result it doesn't feel the need to follow any sort of logical story progression. The kids are constantly blurting out or thinking things that don't make any sense and scenes have no clear beginning or ending. I suppose if you're looking for a group of characters that you can empathize in the general direction of then *Wandering Son* will work for you, but I've just been becoming more and more confused by it.

Aleksandra says

3.5 stars

This manga is consistently good but I guess reading two volumes in one evening wasn't my smartest decision, I grew up tired of reading it.

If you're interested my detailed thoughts on the manga, check my reviews on volume 1 or 2.

I am definitely going back to the manga, but after a small break.

David Schaafsma says

Transgender kid story with a boy who wants to be a girl and a girl who wants to be a boy as friends. In middle school now. In the last issue we saw some complications emerging, as others become aware they are different, some bullying, an older person showing inappropriate affection, and in this volume we begin the complicated middle school love/attraction stuff, with love triangles.. but with the additional complications of feeling messed up about what kind of gender you want to be. The art and production is always strong, lovely, with elegant drawing and coloring and lots of space to reflect with. They really invested in the quality of this work, it's a gorgeous product. And in the story, there's not much melodrama or kooky cartoony manga-type buffoonery. This is a serious, pretty much realistic journey in a transgendered youth life in contemporary society...But as we see others respond to them, you get to recall what middle school often is for kids who are different...Like *Flowers of Evil*, you get to see how mean kids can be to others...

Alexei says

Come check out my book blog! [Teenage Bookaholic](#)

SYNOPSIS: *Note: This is a review for the first six volumes of the series*

The period of adolescence is full of confusion, growth, and discovery. Shuichi Nitori and Yoshino Takatsuki are entering this time in their lives, along with their classmates of course. But both students share a secret that adds to the confusion of adolescence, and could damage their social life: Shuichi is a boy who wants to be a girl, and Yoshino is a girl who wants to be a boy.

Discovering each others' secret, they befriend one another and try to navigate through elementary and junior

high school while coping with their shamefully perceived identities. Along the way, they meet challenges- teasing by classmates, uniforms, romances, and overnight field trips- but find new allies in a wide range of people- quiet classmates, strangers, even famous models! As they bloom into adulthood, can Shu-kun and Yoshino-chan find the confidence to be true to themselves?

REVIEW: It was a strange fate that this series happened upon me. I was in the library, and ducked into a random aisle up on the adult fiction floor. I pretended to be browsing at the books, when this series caught my eye. I looked at the summary on the back and was curious when it mentioned the protagonists are transgendered. It is not common to find many fiction books with a transgendered protagonist, let alone not have the issue consume the entire plot.

This series had a lovely storyline that, while focusing on children, was meant as a more mature read. It kept the focus on the protagonists internal struggles, while not fixating on that point and without making it worth pity. The storyline had some dragging points, but not enough to be put down. It had realistic scenarios, maybe a little too coincidental to be strung as such, but they could very much occur, and showed how common situations had an effect on their identity.

I found some characters to be difficult to distinguish because of the art style, but the dialogue was never confusing. It also served to teach about honorifics in names. Slightly confusing as a Westerner, but through the guide, it made sense. I also appreciated the dynamics in clothing, more than just holiday wear and school uniforms.

All in all, an eye-opening read on transgender, while not being consumed by transgender. Quick and addictive read with clean paneling. I almost hate that its a still continuing series because of having to wait for the translations!

John Wiswell says

One of my favorite things about *Wandering Son* is that it allows its supporting characters to be good influences. Any manga of this length is going to have a supporting cast, and usually they'll accentuate the antagonism over time. In this series the kids are balls of confusion, often acting on impulses they don't understand yet, but they also have opportunities to slap the main characters upside the head and insist they go talk it out. There are models of good friendship, and of now simply allowing fellow children to continue to struggle, that are consistently heartening to read.

Obviously some of this series revolves around the angst of little kids defying their gender roles. They feel like they're doing something wrong, or are afraid to be caught in the "wrong" clothing, or in one particularly cute page, envision themselves as the princess under a wicked stepmother. There's a keen balance of their friends who have crushes on their new identities, or are just excited to see them being so happy for the first time. Shimura does a wonderful job capturing their exuberance in still images, evoking little kids wiggling around or sputtering laughing.

There is nothing prurient about this series. This volume centers on a love triangle, with a boy who is exploring what it means to be a girl, and who has both another boy and another girl who want him to be or the other. The storytelling is still gentle, with plenty of space for the kids to talk out where they're coming from, but there's a raw heart to their conflict, because they want each other to be things that they aren't anymore.

A refreshing book. This is the series I visit when I want to restore my faith in literary humanity.
