THE STORY THUS FAR...

Since Rei's training journey began, he has made some good friends.

In PASSAGE 1, he befriended Ayersha and her family, who were struggling to pull themselves out of poverty.

In PASSAGE 2, Rei fell in love with Somalee, who lost her mother to AIDS. And when Rei had to move on, he didn't know whether her little sister Bissy had contracted HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

In PASSAGE 3, Rei traveled to a tropical paradise, where an old fisherman and his family were in danger of losing their home, and livelihoods because of alarming changes in the ecosystem—and soon Rei was in danger of losing his life.

Rei's inner strength, animal spirit guide, and new friends have seen him safely through some perilous events, but the horror against him in PASSAGE 4 may prove to be too much for anyone...
PASSAGE 4

CHILD SOLDIERS
OF BOYS AND MEN
I'm starving!

Can't you turn into something that lays eggs, or makes milk, or something I can eat?

Snakes lay eggs.

I'm not that hungry.

Halt! Who dares enter my kingdom!

Stop calling me that! My name's Sir Skull-Cracker!

Oof! I forgot!

Halt, there!
AISIEEEE!

HOW DARE YOU HUMILIATE ME, SIR! SKULL-CRACKER?
TAKE THAT 'N' TAKE THAT!

I HAVE DEFEATED YOU, VILE INTERLOPER!

ARGH!

He got me...

I-Is he dead, MacDuggel?

S-Sorry! We was just playing, Mysterious

...
I CAN'T FIND THE WAY!

I'M SCARED OF THE DARK!

THESE ARE MINE.
LET'S TALK.

HELLO?
WE'RE TRYING TO GET HOME, MRS. KELLY.

I HOPE WE GET THERE.
WE'RE STARVING.

MAYBE DAYLIGHT WILL COME SOON.

WE SMELL SOMETHING GOOD.
COOKING!
YOU'RE LATE! AND YOU WERE GONE ALL DAY. MADERO, I TOLD YOU TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR LITTLE SISTER.

YOU KNOW IT'S NOT SAFE TO PLAY IN THE JUNGLE ANYMORE.

YOU'RE WITH THE DRUGS, AREN'T YOU? STAY AWAY FROM MY CHILDREN.

STAY AWAY!

WHAT IF I'M IN TROUBLE OR SOMEBODY I'M JUST TRYING TO FIND MY FATHER... I DON'T CARE. I DON'T CARE. I DON'T CARE...

HEHEE...
THANK YOU FOR BRINGING MY CHILDREN HOME SAFE, MIKI.

ALL IN A DAY'S TRAINING!

THIS IS DELICIOUS, MAMA! WHAT IS IT?

SNAKE EGG OMELETS!

MY FAVORITE!

BLEACH!

If they come any closer to our village, you'll have to report night commuting... But why isn't our mom here? Where's the rebel's wife? If they come any closer to our village, you'll have to report night commuting... night commuting?... That's when you happen take a bus to the city to sleep. As the rebels don't snatch you out of your bed!
ON THE FLOOR!

GET OUT!!

REI, NO!

Do what you will with me, but don't hurt my children!

WE'VE SAID, NO LIE FOR YOU TERRORISTS! HUMAN CHILDREN WE'RE AFTER!

NO! NO! MAMA-A-A!

LEAVE THEM ALONE!

YOUR OLDEST SON IS A QUITE THE HERO, ISN'T HE?
GET UP, YOU BRATS!

TIME TO TRAIN!
ANY OF YOU CHILDREN WISH TO RETURN TO YOUR FAMILIES?

WHAT? I CAN'T HEAR YOU!

OUCH! AGAIN, AND FALL!

KRAK!
HOLD ON, DEVANTE!

What are these boys doing wrong?

What's your name, son?

Well, we're going to help you avoid the enemys. They're after you because you're a friend of ours. The enemys want to kill you.

The enemys are coming from the forest. They don't care about the people in our country. They just want to kill you.

Join our army, and no one will ever find you around again.

Right, Devante?
WE'RE ON YOUR SIDE! WE'RE YOUR NEW TINGS AND UNCLE AND BIG BROTHERS!

BUT JUST LIKE PAPA, WE GOT SOME RULES!

YOU'RE SMART KIDS, RIGHT? GOOD KIDS? YOU KNOW HOW TO FOLLOW RULES?

HO, HO, HO...

YOU'RE SMART KIDS, RIGHT? GOOD KIDS?

OF COURSE, IF YOU DON'T FOLLOW RULES, WE'RE GONNA HAVE TROUBLE FOR ALL OF US!

WE WANT YOU TO BE GOOD KIDS, RIGHT?

WE ARE WORKING TO MAKE EVERYTHING BETTER, RIGHT?

HAR HAR HAR

NOW, YOU'RE GONNA BE GOOD KIDS, RIGHT?

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO FIGHT IN OUR ARMY?

IT'S FREE!
THIS MAN IS THE ENEMY.

HE NEEDS TO BE PUNISHED.

Gulp!

Private:

I won't.

Take it stupid or they'll shoot you instead.

Private:

Teach me to lose the gun.
F'EH! YOU DON'T FIGURE, BUT YOU'VE HAD A SOFT LIFE.
They whipped me with a knife. If I go home, they'll know I run a shelter. If I don’t know anything, they’ll kill me.

The soldiers don’t want me here. I work for them. They said they’ll kill me if I don’t get out of here.

Our parents are gone. We have nowhere to go. We’ll all be killed.

I’ll take you all somewhere. I won’t hand you over. They catch you, they’ll kill you.

Don’t you leave it be. If you get caught, they’ll make sure all you.

They’re asking me. UH... a gun on your shelter.
YOU CAME COME WITH US?
YEAH I WOULD.

YOU KNOW KNOWING A TRIVIAL FACT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE.

HERE, SIT DOWN AND EAT YOUR LUNCH.

HERE, SIT DOWN AND EAT YOUR LUNCH.

HELLO! HOW ARE YOU?

ARE YOU THERE?

I SEE YOU ARE HAVING A MEAL. WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

YOU SEE HOW YOU ARE HAVING A MEAL. WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

THE ALLIANCE IS THINKING OF YOU. WHERE ARE YOU FROM?
DAMN!

KEEP GOING AND DON'T LOOK BACK!

ARE YOU A DESERTER TOO?

NO, SIR!

WELL, SHUT THEM DOWN THEN!

SHOOT TO KILL!
I'LL GET BACK-UP!

FANTASTIC LITTLE!
He's tame! He must be... uh, somebody's pet!
I told Vashita that I was following her as none other.

You know, if you don't give me your name, I might start calling you 'Fluffy Whiskers.'

Just a little further to your right, I've got some friends who are going to meet Vashita.

You don't like it, right?

Mama keeps your bag for you.

We're going to go live with my brothers, where it's safe.

But you're coming with us, ok? We'll tell you everything.

Come live with us, now.

Thank you, but ...

I'm still looking for my family.

You know, I don't want to part with my family...

When the soldiers came for me, they gave me my small bag and hands and face...

When the soldiers came for me...
SHOOT!
YOUR BROTHER OR YOUR FATHER?
ONE'S TOO SCREAMING TO FIGHT, AND THE OTHER'S TOO OLD!
SHOOT ONE, AND WE'LL LET THE OTHER LIVE!
PICTURE ONE, OR WE'LL SHOOT YOU!

NO!
DON'T DO IT!
(PAPA-T)
GRAB

No-o-o!

BLAM!
SO WHERE ARE YOU GOING ALL AFTER THE MEETING WITH ME RIGHT NOW?

DON'T KNOW HERE AND THERE.

YOU SHOULD TRAVEL WITH ME.

I'VE LIVED ON THE ROAD FOR A WHILE. I KNOW HOW TO FLY IN AN AIRPLANE. SO YOU CAN LIVE WITH ME. I COULD TEACH YOU HOW TO FLY. YOU CAN GO BACK TO SCHOOL, AND BECOME A MECHANIC.

YOU CAN'T TEACH ME.

WHAT WOULD YOU THINK IF YOU WERE A GHOST?

YOU ARE ALL RIGHT... I LOVE SOME ANIMALS. I THOUGHT YOU WOULD COME TO US.

WHAT? YOU ARE WHAT??
I want you to have this. It's a manga about fighting. The stuff you do—where you protect and help people.

My father used to read it to me. Soon you'll be able to read it yourself.

Thanks, but...

This is from your father. It's all you have left of him. My father gave me this.

I can't take this from you. But I'll keep a page to remember you by.

Goodbye—brother.

I hope you find your way home. You're someone little fellow...

Squeak.

Thank you.
Your dear son Reiji
Birth date: 11/10/93
Lost 3 years ago in the
Arctic where he was
Since that time, no
News. Contact me if you have any news.
CHILDREN IN WAR

• Today, over 300,000 children are involved in armed conflicts in more than 30 countries around the world.
• Forty percent of the world’s armed groups have children in their ranks, including nearly half a million serving in armies that are not at war.
• Another five million children have been left with permanent injuries.

CHILD SOLDIERS

One of the ugliest realities of modern war is the deliberate recruitment of innocent children into armed forces. In many conflicts around the world, adolescents and children—some as young as six years old—are given guns and taught how to torture and kill.

From Africa and the Middle East to Europe, Latin America, and Asia, countries at war have seen boys and girls engaging in active combat or supporting armed forces in other ways, such as carrying ammunition or preparing food. They suffer from AIDS and other diseases that accompany combat. Girls are often used as sex slaves, or are at particular risk of rape, sexual harassment, and abuse. Turned from their families and thrust into the midst of intense violence, many of the children who survive armed conflicts are left with physical, emotional, and psychological scars that affect them for the rest of their lives.

WHAT IS A “CHILD SOLDIER”?

In 1997, an international symposium sponsored by UNICEF and a child’s rights organization was held in Cape Town, South Africa, to develop strategies for preventing children from being recruited as soldiers. The “Cape Town Principles” that resulted from this meeting describe a child soldier as any child associated with a fighting force. This includes girls who are forced to serve as sex slaves or children used as spies, lookouts, or in other roles to serve armies. According to these principles, a child does not have to use a weapon in order to be considered a child soldier.

WHY DO ARMIES USE CHILDREN?

Armed forces exploit children view them as effective, obedient, and expendable fighters. They are easy to indoctrinate and transform into fearless killers through tactics including torture, terror, humiliation, brainwashing, and false promises of material rewards. Armies take advantage of children’s innocent appearance. They send child units onto the field to mislead and confuse opposing forces. Child soldiers can serve as effective spies or decoys, or as advance troops in ambush attacks. They can also be very mobile on the field and more daring than adults in combat. Many armies deliberately try to heighten children’s natural fearlessness by getting them high on alcohol or drugs such as cocaine, amphetamines, or barbiturates.

HOW CAN CHILDREN HANDLE ADULT WEAPONS?

One factor that enables armies to use children as soldiers is the technical advancement of small arms. Modern weapons used today are lightweight, portable, easy to use, and inexpensive. For instance, the readily available Kalashnikov AK-47 weighs only about 10 pounds, or 4.5 kilograms. A ten-year-old can learn how to fire an AK-47 in about half an hour.

HOW ARE THE CHILDREN RECRUITED?

Various types of armed political groups, from government-backed paramilitary groups to opposition forces, militias, and self-defense units have actively recruited children. Most of the children are recruited against their will, some even kidnapped from their homes and schools. But many also “volunteer” to join because they see no better alternatives in life. Their families may be too poor to afford food or a decent education, with the breakdown of communities and
families during war, these children may turn to armed forces as the only way to survive. Because they only know a culture of violence, they may develop a twisted belief that being a soldier will give them power and prestige. Some also plan to take revenge for the loss of a relative or family member in the war, continuing a vicious cycle of violence.

AFTER WAR...
WHAT HAPPENS TO CHILD SOLDIERS WHEN WAR ENDS?
Restoring the lives of children who have experienced the worst forms of brutality is one of the most difficult yet urgent tasks for countries that are coming out of war. Until recently, though, child soldiers were not even recognized in peace settlements, and were lumped together with adults as "ex-combatants." This was partly because countries did not want to admit they used child soldiers.

For child soldiers, returning to a normal life is critical, but it is difficult to reverse the physical and psychological effects of war. Now, a number of countries have implemented programs, both during and after armed conflict, to assist former child soldiers in recovering from the traumas of war, acquiring new skills, and returning to their communities.

REINTEGRATION PROGRAM GOALS:
• Help not only those child soldiers who carry weapons, but also the many more engaged in non-combat support roles.
• Address the needs of girls affiliated with armed groups, including those sexually exploited by the combatants. Girls often have non-fighting roles, and thus weapons-collecting programs may overlook them.
• Meet basic physical needs, including food, shelter, and urgent medical attention. Child soldiers are often malnourished and suffer from various diseases, including sexually transmitted diseases.
• Address and try to reverse children’s deep psychological scars, including extreme depression, aggressive behavior, nightmares, and learning problems. Counseling, recreational programs, and educational programs can help provide a normal daily routine.
• Return children to their families and communities. Unfortunately, families may be impossible to locate after the chaos of fighting. In fact, many children are left orphaned by war. Even if located, families and communities may be reluctant to accept former child soldiers.

HOW CAN THE RECRUITMENT OF CHILD SOLDIERS BE PREVENTED?
• Prevent family separations and reunify separated children with their families. Separated children are highly vulnerable to recruitment into military forces. During conflict, separations are common. Family tracing programs have been successfully coordinated by various international and local groups.
• Set up child protection networks in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Save the Children UK has experimented with Child Protection Networks involving a wide range of local partners. These networks work to prevent recruitment by negotiating with local armed groups and facilitating family reunification with children vulnerable to recruitment.
• Provide economic alternatives. Tackling the root causes of poverty and providing poor households with job opportunities can help prevent some children from enlisting in armed forces.
• Provide children with educational alternatives. Children who are not enrolled in school are at a higher risk of recruitment. Schools can also educate children about their rights and about the risks of joining a fighting force. However, schools may also be targets for military recruiters.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CHILD SOLDIERS
Check out:
www.unicef.org/emerg/index_childsoldiers.html
www.savethechildren.org
www.dk.org/publication/9553/child_soldiers_around_the_world.html
www.child-soldiers.org
www.un.org/protection/indexarmedconflict.html

FOR A MAP OF CHILD SOLDIERS, SEE:
THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICT AND POVERTY

The tragic phenomenon of child soldiers emerges from a global problem of increasing warfare not between countries but within countries. The number of civil wars around the world has been rising over the past 40 years, fueled by a vicious cycle in which poverty causes conflict and conflict causes poverty. Eighty percent of the world’s 30 poorest countries have suffered a major war in the past 15 years. On average, countries coming out of war face a 50 percent chance of relapsing during the first five years of peace. Even with rapid progress after peace, it can take a generation or more just to return to pre-war living standards.

To learn more about conflict and poverty, check out:
- www.worldbank.org/conflict
- whyyouthink.worldbank.org/issues/conflict

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Chat with other kids who are concerned about child soldiers by joining UNICEF’s Discussion Forum at www.sprout.org/youngpeople.
- Get involved. Contact organizations such as the International Rescue Committee that work with child soldiers and refugee youth. Find opportunities to volunteer to help young people injured by war and civil conflict.

Did you Miss the Last Three Issues of Y World Manga?

Order at store.viz.com or your friendly bookstore or online bookseller! All proceeds go to:
Reading is Fundamental!

1 WORLD MANGA: Passage 1: POVERTY–A Ray of Light
1 WORLD MANGA: Passage 2: HIV/AIDS–First Love
1 WORLD MANGA: Passage 3: GLOBAL WARMING–The Lagoon of the Vanishing Fish

Rei learns several lessons next issue when he meets a group of girls who can’t wait to learn their lessons! You think getting up in time to beat the first bell is hard? These girls have much greater obstacles to overcome to get an education! Plus, Rei has a transforming experience—several, in fact—and learns about the animal kingdom up close and personal!

Do you know what animal "Ruffy" is? E-mail any comments to yworldmanga@viz.com! Every e-mail answered personally!
Teenage orphan Rei survives by his wits and guts on the mean streets of the world. His fortunes seem to look up when he meets a mysterious stranger who offers to help him achieve his dream of becoming the greatest martial artist in the world. But Rei's trainer is more interested in developing his mind, spirit, and—ugh—heart than his thrashing, raging, fighting moves! And Rei's master turns out to be a real animal! In fact, Rei never knows what animal he's going to turn into next!

Mercenaries kidnap our hero and force him to fight in an illegal army beside other children ripped from their homes and families. Struggling just to survive from one day to the next, will Rei be able to escape, let alone lead his fellow child soldiers to freedom?