

## **Avalon: Rei and Takashi**

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In my comic book Avalon, the two main characters, Rei and Takashi Ishikawa, are the children of Daisuke and Kazuko Ishikawa. Together they live in a small, secluded fishing village on the rural edges of Kanazawa, Japan. Rei would help her mother around the house and write short stories to entertain them both because Kazuko encouraged her to imagine beyond their mundane village life. Takashi also liked to help his mother in his own way but this would often trouble the neighbors. Both Rei and Takashi didn't see their father much because of the long daily fishing ventures he'd take with the other village fishermen. But on the rare occasions his father had free time, Daisuke would teach Takashi how to fish. These were moments Takashi treasured because the more he learned, the closer and closer he got to becoming like his father one day. Life was simple even with the occasional brother-sister bickering here and there. However, after a catastrophic event, both children gruesomely discover that their life is far from that. After their Uncle Mamoru takes them in, he sets their lives on a completely new path. But the trauma from their childhood completely transforms how they see the world and themselves into early adulthood. Both of these factors greatly impact their journey ahead.

One of the best moments in my life was when I discovered comics and chose it as a medium to bridge the gap between my imagination, its characters, and reality. Rei and Takashi, from their personalities to the journey they embark on when they're older, are a product of my own life experiences and those I've observed and overheard from others around me. But in a way, they both gained a life of their own. I wanted to learn about Rei and Takashi and ask myself why they acted and said the things they did. For so long, I charged ahead only with the goal of finishing my comic. But after I learned how vital the characters are to the integrity of a story, I decided to take a step back and get to know them. I started to ask myself a list of open-ended questions all aimed at thinking of the characters as multidimensional and answered them specifically in the context of what they'd experienced and have yet to experience in the story. As a part of this process, I created extractive pieces that represented different elements from my answers that also fed back into the comic book as a whole.

The pieces allowed me to realize how much the main characters were impacted by the death of their parents that consequently led to a massive shift in the story. The struggle Takashi has coming to terms with the fact that the precious moments he had fishing with his father or any moment with his hero are no longer reality, replaces the wild, troublemaker with a reserved, over-trusting adult eager to create a sense of stability even if it's false. In contrast, the death of her mom gave Rei a cold slap of reality, replacing the bright, imaginative girl with a stone facade of a rash, overzealous woman that's really a shell surrounding her fragile sense of self-worth. Creating physical representations of what I learned about my characters allowed their desires, goals, and inner torments to run through my head daily. In conjunction with the comic, Rei and Takashi became so real and tangible in my imagination that I want other people to believe in their reality as much as I do.