

KATANA ZERO

UNRELIABLE INFORMATION & CHARACTERS

The core narrative element of *Katana ZERO* is that of **questioning one's perception of reality**. Characters consistently lie to our protagonist, Zero, who himself is established as an **unreliable narrator** under the withdrawal of the drug, *Chronos*, which warps one's perception of time and its linearity. This ambiguity extends to the characters' very existence, with doubts cast over who is real, who may be a **figment of imagination**, or if there are **supernatural elements** at play. The primary concern of the story, then, becomes that of the player and Zero separating delusions from reality and discovering what is actually happening – a journey that becomes just as central to *Katana ZERO* as its fast-paced, moment-to-moment gameplay.

The narrative follows a unique way of establishing antagonists. The only person that provides Zero with medicine to prevent him from **spiraling into madness** subsequently becomes Zero's **adversary** for forcing him to eliminate the people that hold answers to Zero's questions. In the same vein, the **antagonists** of the game are labeled as such not for causing **physical harm** to Zero, as much as for plunging Zero and the player further into **the pit of lies and deceit**. The story unfolds like a jigsaw puzzle, with some pieces held by people who really don't want to give them up, and other pieces not even coming from the same set. As such, it leaves it up to both Zero and the audience to collect the pieces, often from the **dead hands** of Zero's opponents, and assemble them into a coherent picture.

PRESENTATION & FRAMING DEVICES

The presentation and framing devices of *Katana ZERO* further blur the lines between **reality, narrative, and meta-narrative**, creating a **multi-layered storytelling experience**. Combat and gameplay, ostensibly taking place in the **present**, are revealed to be premeditated actions within Zero's **mind**, with the actual outcomes of the combat only **viewed by the player through the detached lens of security camera footage**. Characters receive information through in-universe movies, which suddenly turn into real-time gameplay. Constant switching and layering of framing devices **keep the player guessing** as to where the game events take place in the story.

From the **non-linear jump cuts** between different parts of the story's timeline and **drug-induced hallucinations** to the game's settings menu being that of an old cassette player paired with individual missions being cassettes that get slotted into a TV, *Katana ZERO* constantly plays with the concept of **manipulating the player's level of immersion**. This intricate layering not only provides a highly unique method of presentation but also reflects the **complex interplay between warped perception, memory, and reality** which present themselves as the core themes of the game's story.

