FORALLPOSTERITY PRESENTS:

The Caged Blue Bird



AN AKANE KURASHIKI FEAT

(HEAVY SPOILER WARNING FOR THE ENTIRE ZERO ESCAPE STORY)

PART ONE: THE SETUP

This is Sigma Klim



Fanart of Sigma (left) and Phi (right)

Sigma Klim is the main protagonist of Zero Escape Virtue's Last Reward, the second game of the Zero Escape series and is the

character that you play as throughout the entire game. He is a compassionate, intelligent and a highly driven person who, despite some of his flaws, always makes sure to do what's right for everyone around him. He has done nothing evil and is by all accounts, a good person.

This doc is an analysis on how Akane Kurashiki completely and utterly ruined his life



But first, it's important to understand the overall story of Zero Escape VLR and ZTD as those two games are incredibly

interconnected and relevant to the story of Sigma and how Akane manipulated him throughout decades in order to achieve her plans.

Virtue's Last Reward (VLR) exists in the timeline as a sort of "bad ending" to the entire Zero Escape story, it is an alternate timeline compared to the "good ending" and it's entirely started within the game of Zero Time Dilemma (ZTD). Specifically, it was caused by the events of D-END 1 in the game but I will explain what that ending is later and why it's important

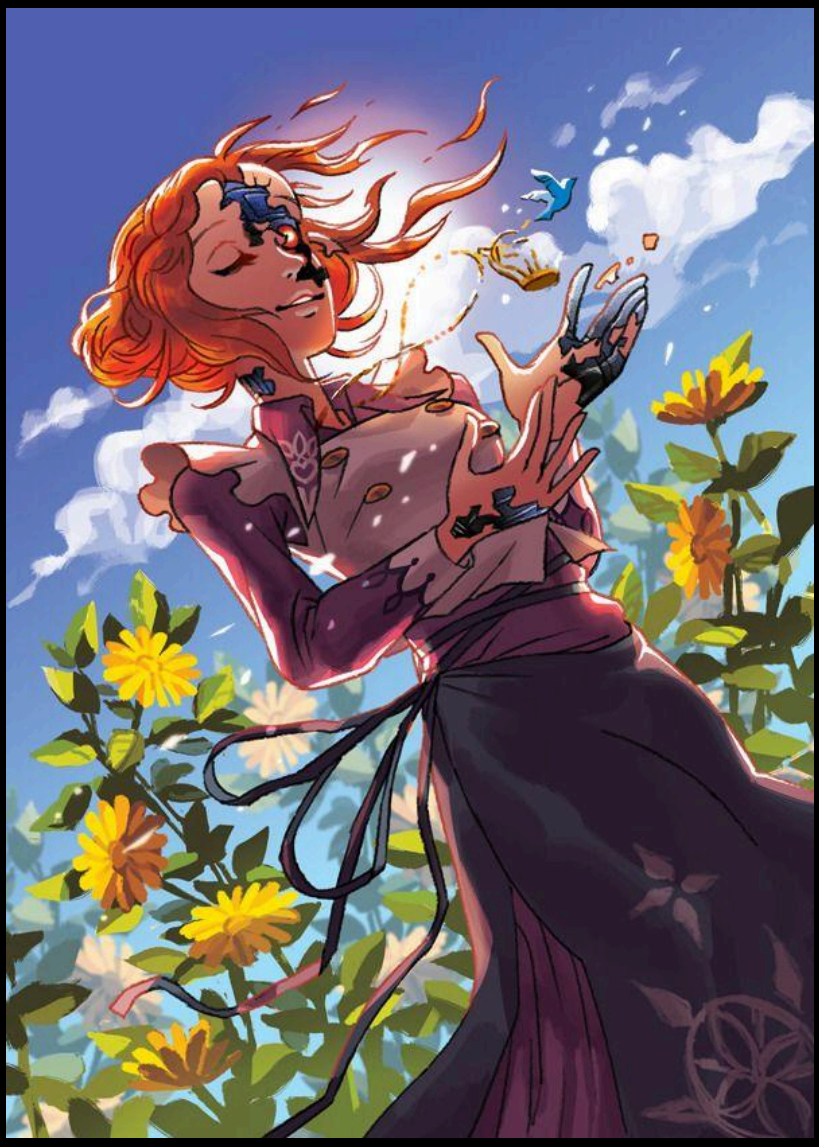
The earliest game in the series, Zero Escape 999, takes place in 2027 and is the earliest playable point in the ZE timeline. Zero Time Dilemma, the third game, takes place only one year after 999 in late 2028 to early 2029 and is, of course, the second earliest playable point in the ZE story.

Virtue's Last Reward, however, takes place in 2074. A full 45 years after the events of ZTD. This is important to keep in mind as I will be talking about the events of VLR *first* before I talk about ZTD, despite it coming way later in the Zero Escape Timeline. This will make sense later but for now just understand that it's the correct

thing to do to play VLR before ZTD as the events of ZTD don't make sense without VLR, despite it coming earlier in the timeline.

It is also very important to understand the general concept of SHIFTing in the Zero Escape series. Due to the sci-fi elements of the story, certain characters are capable of "SHIFTing", which allows them to transfer their consciousness across time and even to alternate timelines but only under certain conditions. Characters that have this ability include Sigma Klim and Akane Kurashiki, which is why I mention that Akane and Sigma's story goes across many years and timelines. Just note that it's not Sigma's *body* that travels through time, only his consciousness.

PART TWO: THE AB PROJECT



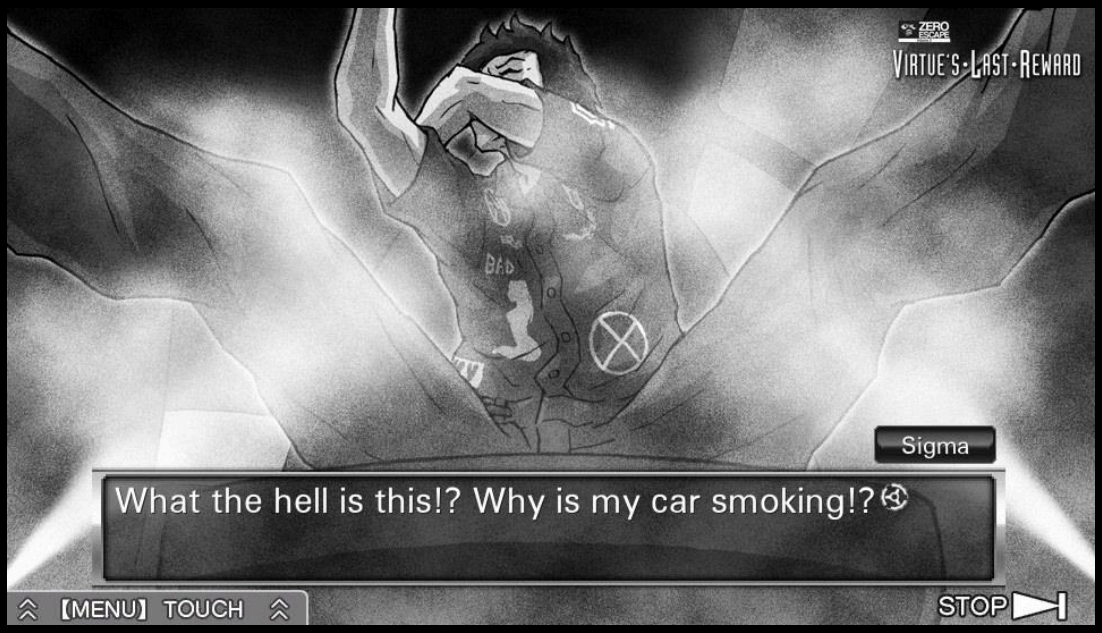
Fanart of Luna

The first relevant point, from Sigma's POV, is the Luna Ending from VLR, the second-to-last ending in the game (by recommended play order).

But first, some background knowledge for the game of VLR:

25/12/2028:

Sigma gets into his car after handing in an important assignment for college. Shortly afterwards, his car starts filling with a nauseous gas that knocks him unconscious.



Before he loses consciousness, Sigma was able to get a glance at his attacker. A strange figure wearing a cloak and a gas mask and if

you've played 999, you're already well aware on who this figure is



Zero, AKA, Akane Kurashiki.

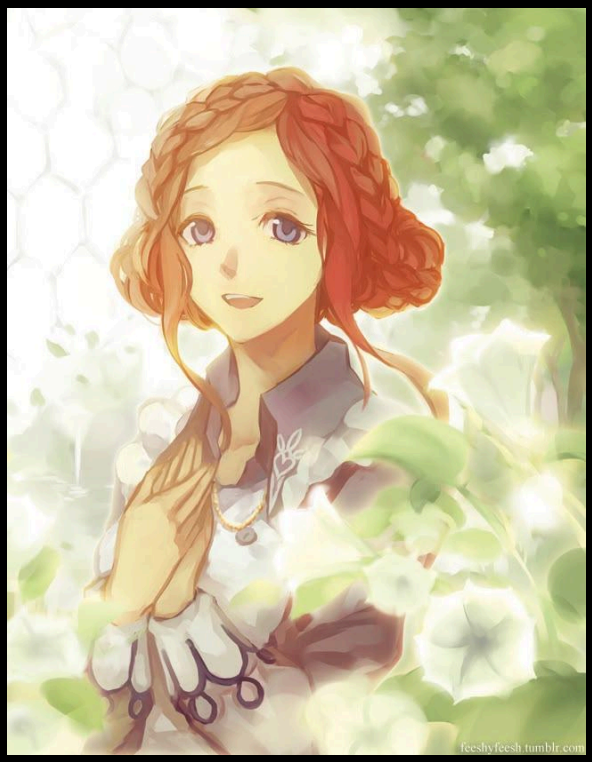
And now, onto the AB Project, where the majority of VLR takes place.

24/01/2074

Sigma wakes up to find himself in the AB Project, the name of the death game the player is placed into in VLR. At this point, Sigma doesn't know that he's been transported 45 years into the future or that he's on the moon, but that will be revealed to him in due time.

The entire AB Project AKA the full game of VLR isn't relevant to this doc so I'm skipping a lot of content, just know that Sigma goes through a LOT during the events of the game. Death, betrayal, friendships and most importantly of all, a spark of love.

This is where we arrive at the Luna Ending of VLR.



Luna is an android created in order to enact a certain purpose in the AB Project which again, isn't relevant for this document. Luna is a peaceful, kind, gentle and caring person. Throughout the entire game, she is the only character to never pick the "Betray" option in the Ambidex Game a single time. This is important because Sigma butts heads and overall has troubles with every other character in

many different timelines, but never with Luna. This facilitates a positive image on her from Sigma and even the player themselves.

After the rollercoaster ride that was the Luna Ending timeline, Luna and Sigma meet in the B.Garden area in order to discuss the events that just transpired. The events in question are too long for the purposes of this doc, but just know that it was Akane herself that gave Luna the orders to enact the ending that led to her own demise. Basically, Akane planned the ***ENTIRE*** ending.

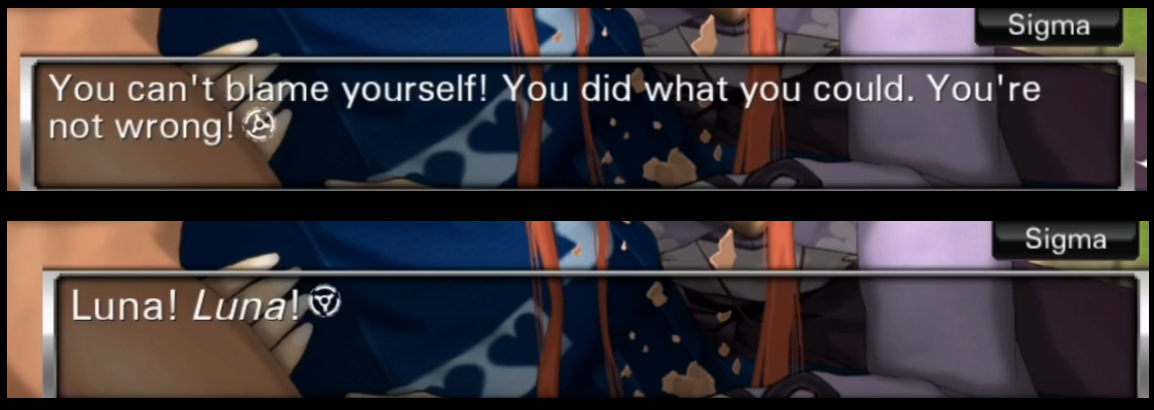


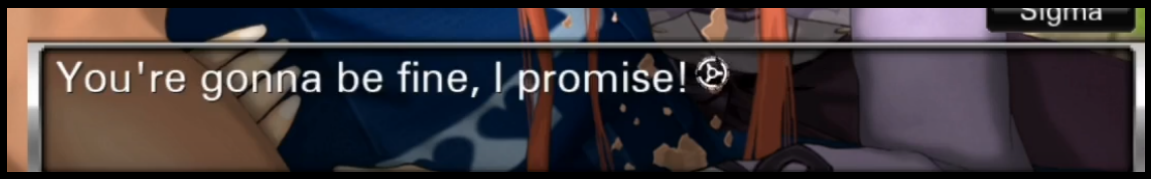
After a lengthy conversation, Luna twists something on her Blue Bird necklace that lets out a small tune. The necklace itself and the Blue Bird motif is based on the play aptly named *The Blue Bird* made

by Maurice Maeterlinck. Luna, who's now beginning to disintegrate due to going against her own programming, embraces Sigma as she talks about her regrets and how she could've saved everyone.



As Luna began to fade away, Sigma became increasingly more emotional, not wanting Luna to leave him, showcasing just how much Sigma began to care for her.





...But she couldn't answer.
I squeezed my eyes shut and held her, unable to bear the thought of letting any more of her slip away.

With one last, quiet chime, the music box wound down.
I was left with nothing but silence and the cold pool of tears over my heart.

This ending ultimately leads nowhere and Sigma's consciousness continues with the AB Project until it gets to the Phi Ending where Sigma remembers everything that happened during the AB Project in all possible timelines, including the Luna Ending timeline.

Akane had deliberately made Luna die, all for an ending that seemingly served no real significance to the AB Project. This is odd, all the other endings that she directly had a role in producing always came with a clear purpose that was explained later, but not this one. Naturally the full extent of why the Luna ending happened will be revealed later, but for now just know that Akane made this happen on purpose just so the seeds of love could be planted into Sigma's heart.

[EU, EF, Relationship Management, Social Engineering, Strategy/Planning, Manipulation]

In the Phi Ending, Akane explains the entire purpose of the AB Project (except the Luna ending), why it was created, how it will end and what role Sigma has in it. Akane reveals that the AB Project was built by herself and Sigma Klim who was only known as “Zero Sr.” throughout the game and now, he must undergo a SHIFT back to the year 2029 so that he and Akane can spend the next 45 years building the AB Project in order build the events that will lead to a breakaway in the timeloop they are now caught in. To facilitate the SHIFT, Akane stimulates the sense of danger required in order for one to SHIFT by rushing at Phi, who Sigma cares a lot about, with a

knife.

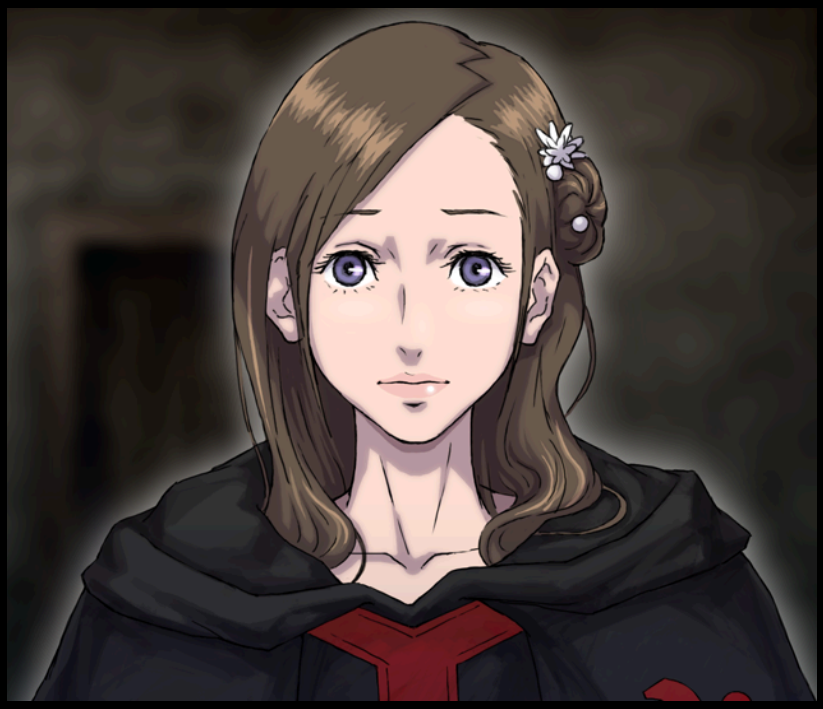


Sigma then blocks Akane from "stabbing" Phi (She was only *pretending* to stab her) by jumping in front of the blade and getting stabbed himself (again he wasn't actually stabbed, Akane just made him think that he was in order to make him SHIFT into his body in 2029).

13/04/2029

Now having sent his consciousness back through time, Sigma wakes up to find himself in his 22 year old body (he was in the old version of his body throughout the entire VLR game but that's another story) and meets the equally young Akane who explains that she

didn't actually stab him and reiterates his role in creating the AB Project for the next 45 years.



Remember, this is *after* she made Sigma go through the horrible experience of the AB Project, where the people he came to respect and care for died over and over again in front of his eyes as he kept SHIFTing through timelines, trying to find answers to everything. She had kidnapped everyone and forced them into playing her sick game and now she expects him to willingly work for her?



But as antimatter reactors explode around them and the news broadcasts the horrible effects of the Radical-6 apocalypse, everything clicks into place for Sigma. This was his purpose, the AB Project was built to prevent this outcome and he gets to be a part of it.

Despite all the despair and agony that came with the AB Project, Akane was able to manipulate Sigma into voluntarily working with her for the next 45 years in order to save the world. Even though it was for a noble cause, Sigma had every reason to refuse her in my opinion just from the sheer amount of pain he went through that was directly caused by Akane. But he didn't refuse and willingly went to the moon with Akane to spend decades in solitude,

completely dedicated to his research and inventions in order to help Akane's cause, and the Luna Ending played a role in that.
[EU, EF, Manipulation, Planning]

This is where the game of VLR ends, the credits roll and the game is finished. But off-screen, another event occurs just before Sigma and Akane leave to go to the moon. A red-headed woman who Sigma had never met before strolls in, excited to see him, seemingly having already known him for quite a long time now.

The woman's name was Diana



PART THREE: THE AB PROJECT, REPRISED

We find ourselves at the beginning, the starting point of the AB Project in 2029. Diana, who had not been a part of the Project at all nor even of any particular help, requested to join the two of them for their mission on the moon. Akane, despite having no real reason to include her, decides to let her join anyway.

Something immediately stuck out about Diana to Sigma, a certain necklace that he had only seen one other person wear. A caged Blue Bird that also doubled as a musicbox. It was identical to Luna's own necklace. This is probably what caused Sigma to develop a connection to Diana in the first place. Her looks combined with the necklace, it reminded him so much of Luna, the android he deeply cared for if not loved, but it was otherwise a relationship cut too short due to the tragic events of the Luna Ending.

As days turned into months turned into years on the moon, Sigma and Diana became close and eventually fell in love. Diana tells Sigma about her own life, her past and her experiences which strengthens their bond. Diana helped out whenever she could with Sigma's research and study on the moon in order to build the AB Project but 3 years after arriving on the moon, tragedy struck. Due to the moon's low gravity, Diana developed a circulatory illness that, despite having access to the best medical technologies, ended up killing Diana, cutting her life short.

Grief-stricken and overwhelmed, Sigma poured everything he could into the AB Project, including developing a line of androids named GAULEM's to handle the manual labour aspects of building the AB

Project. In honour of his dead lover, Sigma took one of the GAULEM's and molded it into something new, a special purpose android that took on the resemblance of Diana. Having kept Diana's Blue Bird necklace this entire time, Sigma gives it to his creation for her to keep.

He named his creation: Luna

SUMMARY:

As is common with a lot of Zero Escape plotlines, the love story between Sigma and Luna/Diana is a Bootstrap Paradox.

Young Sigma (the one who's going through VLR for the first time) comes to deeply care/love the android called Luna → Young Sigma gets his consciousness sent back to 2029 to start on the AB Project he already went through and meets Diana → Young Sigma becomes Old Sigma as he works on the AB Project alongside Diana, who he falls in love with → Diana dies and Old Sigma is heartbroken → Old Sigma creates Luna to resemble his old lover Diana → Old Sigma, upon the completion of the AB Project, gets his consciousness sent

back to 2029 but this time it's to take part in the ZTD Decision Game → Young Sigma gets kidnapped by Akane and is forced to take part in the now-completed AB Project → Young Sigma falls in love with Luna.
It's a loop, crafted and facilitated by Akane Kurashiki.

Also, it's theorycrafting as it's never been outright confirmed in game, but there's strong reason to believe that Akane either directly or indirectly caused Diana to die so that Sigma could create Luna. Isn't it odd that Diana died from the negative effects of living in low gravity after only 3 years but the same thing didn't happen to Sigma or Akane even after 45 years? From this I believe it's safe to conclude that it was Akane's fault that Diana died as it was aligned with her goals.
[EU, Social Engineering, Strategy, Planning, Deception, Manipulation, Cruelty]



But what were those goals? We're close to the answer as this is only half the story and there's still unanswered questions, such as "Where did Diana originally come from?"

And a question that I already revealed the answer to within the summary: "If Y.Sigma's consciousness was in O.Sigma's body, then where was O.Sigma's consciousness?" Well that's easy, it was in Y.Sigma's body, all the way back in 2028 just after Y.Sigma was kidnapped. That's where the consciousness of the Sigma who had spent 45 years building the AB Project ended up after the Project's completion (AKA Old Sigma/O.Sigma). The reason *that* happened

was because O.Sigma was to take part in the Decision Game, which is the main storyline/game that takes place in Zero Time Dilemma

PART FOUR: THE DECISION GAME



31/25/2028:

After waking up in his younger body and after a few unsuccessful attempts at getting the world to believe that the Radical-6 apocalypse is about to begin, Sigma, Phi and Akane meet back up again and head towards the Mars Mission Test Site in order to prevent the spread of Radical-6. After anxiously waiting, they soon realize too late that the test site is a trap and they along with 6 other people are forced into playing The Decision Game by a man calling himself “Zero II”, but we come to know later that this man is Delta.



The 9 unwilling participants of the Decision Game are put into 3 teams of 3 people. Sigma, Phi (who has SHIFTed from VLR too btw)

and most importantly of all, Diana, are all placed into D-Team with Diana as its leader.

Now the shoe is on the other foot and it is Sigma who knows a lot about Diana despite her having never met him before, mirroring exactly how Diana met him after the events of what's about to transpire and before VLR began. Sigma keeps his mouth shut about knowing Diana and her being his former lover from a long time ago in his relative past, as he was warned by Phi earlier to not tell anyone about the future and he took that to heart.

The events of ZTD are long and complicated so I'll once again only stick to what's strictly relevant to this document's purposes, this comes at the cost of causing a lot more confusion for those of us that haven't played Zero Escape but for the sake of not explaining the entire plot of the series, this will have to do.

D-END 2:



During the events of an escape room, Phi is incinerated and Sigma and Diana lose their memories of the event shortly after (due to the memory erasing drug in their bracelets that they can't remove). After they wake up, they realize that they're trapped within the Decision Game as the only two players left. This is because of certain events that led to Akane who is in C-Team to gather 6 X-Passes that she needed in order to leave the games (X-Passes only activate on a player's death AKA you need 6 players to die in order to leave the Decision Game, which is what happened in this timeline).

Sigma and Diana, knowing that they're the only two left with no way out, decide to trust that Akane will return to come and save them.

They had enough food and supplies to last 10 months before they ran out

Days turned into weeks and there was still no sign of rescue, but the pair still remained mostly in high spirits. Diana, in a talk with Sigma, even went as far as to call it “peaceful” as they didn’t have to deal with any of the troubles of the outside world. During this talk, Diana likened their situation to The Blue Bird play and pulled out her Blue Bird necklace to make the point.



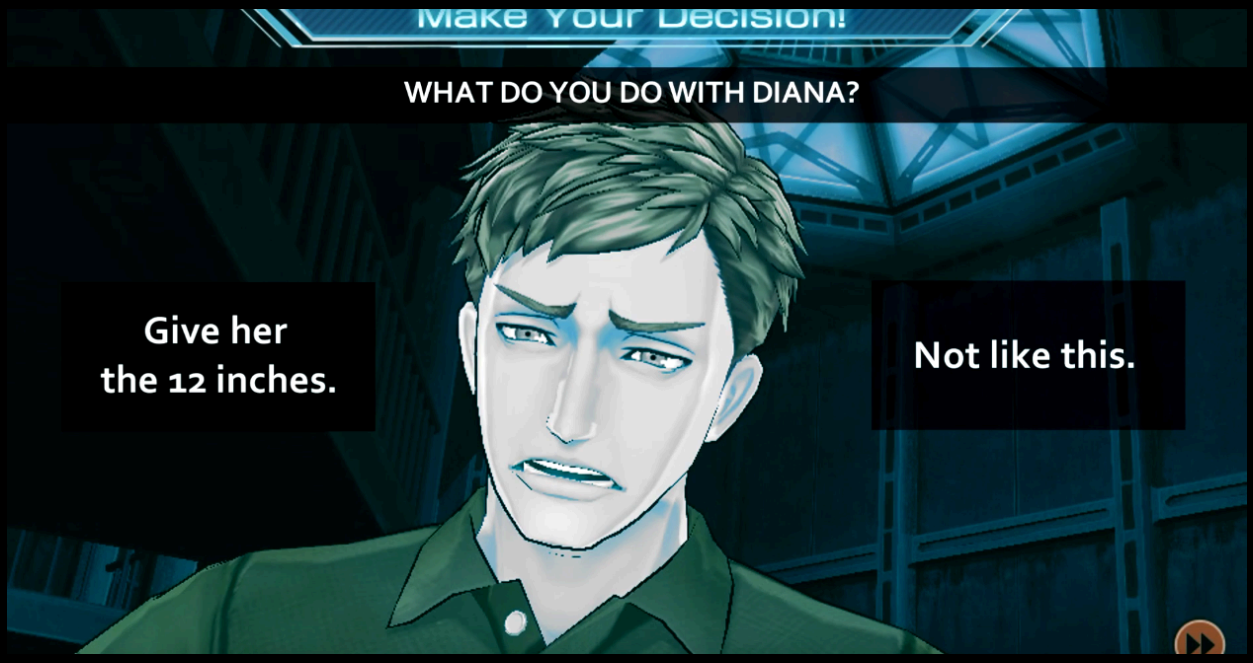
She brings up the interpretation of the final version of the play: “Happiness is closer than you’d think”. But Sigma tells her that she’s incorrect. He goes on to explain that in the original version of the play, the titular Blue Bird escapes from the cage and flies away, which changes the meaning of the play to “Happiness will escape

from you the moment you believe you have it." A stark reminder of the situation they find themselves in.

After a month of isolation and no sign of Akane coming back to rescue them, Diana begins to lose it. She becomes angry that nothing has happened, that she's still stuck in this place after a full month with no signs of anything to come in the future. This is around the time that Sigma begins to reveal to her that he knows a lot about her past, and the reason why he knows is because Diana told him these things herself, in another timeline's future (D-END 1, the precursor to VLR)

After even more time passes and Diana begins consuming copious amounts of alcohol, she eventually begs Sigma to either have sex

with her or kill her to which Sigma refuses both options.



(Not a real screenshot, before you ask)

Not long afterwards, the two of them reconcile after a heart warming monologue from Sigma as he explains how he was afraid to lose her. They later have sex inside one of the transporter pods

The Transporter is a large device that's in an escape room they have access to. It takes 10 months to charge and they already used it right after Akane left. The transporter records a maximum of 2 people's minds and bodies at a time and even has the option to send the records back through time, so the bodies can be reconstructed even earlier across different timelines. This will be important information real soon.

Shortly after they got freaky, Diana reveals that she's pregnant and 9 months later, she gives birth to fraternal twins, a boy and a girl. At the same time though, their 10 months of rations are soon to run completely dry but since the transporter also takes 10 months to charge, it's now ready again and is fully charged. Sigma and Diana make a hard choice. Recognizing that there's no way for them to escape, they decide to use the transporter to record and transmit the consciousnesses of their children to another timeline where they can be safe and sound. They decided to send their kids data before Zero II got his hands on the transporter which ended up being sometime before 2009. Before they use the transporter, they give their baby twins their names. Diana names the boy Delta, named after a Greek letter, just like Sigma. Sigma in turn names the girl Phi, also named after a Greek letter and in memory of his dear friend and comrade throughout VLR and ZTD.



That's right, the Phi from VLR and Sigma's child are in fact, the same person. The person who was by Sigma's side all along (and who he made several pervy comments towards) was actually his own daughter.

More importantly, his son, Delta, is also the exact same person as Zero II, the person behind the Decision Games.



SUMMARY:

There's a lot of questions to be answered. Biggest of all: If Akane supposedly planned all of this, why did it result in the birth of the person who kidnapped her and her allies and the person she's seemingly trying to stop?

Because she was never trying to stop Delta, all she wanted was to prevent the world from succumbing to Radical-6 and the whole reason why Delta caused Radical-6 was allegedly to kill a terrorist which would bring about humanities extinction, he figured that 2 billion people surviving was better than nobody surviving.

So, Akane and Delta made a compromise and worked together in order to kill the terrorist Delta was after without needing to resort to Radical-6. And to accomplish that, they collaborated on The Decision Game. The full depth of Akane's plan goes beyond the scope of this doc and will have to wait for a full doc on Akane before I can explain it in detail.

Despite Akane fighting to prevent Radical-6 and thus the VLR timeline from happening, she still *needed* it to occur because remember, the Sigma that takes part in the Decision Game that leads to Delta's birth came from the VLR timeline and so, in a cruel twist of fate, Akane needed the VLR timeline to exist in order to prevent its existence. Here's how she used Sigma Klim in order to make it happen.

<u>D-END 1:</u>

As previously mentioned, the ending in ZTD that leads into the VLR timeline is called D-END 1 while the timeline that lead to Sigma and Diana being trapped within the Decision Game for months that lead to the births of Delta and Phi was D-END 2. So what actually happened in D-END 1? Well, remember that question of "Where did Diana originally come from?"

During the events of D-END 1, an explosion goes off in an escape room that gravely wounds Sigma, causing him to lose both his arms and an eye. After the explosion goes off, Diana and Phi use it to escape while dragging the wounded Sigma with them. On their way out, Phi gets stabbed in the leg with a syringe by another player named Mira. That syringe contained the Radical-6 virus and made Phi patient 0 for the oncoming apocalypse. Phi pleaded and begged Diana to kill her as it would prevent the deaths of 6 Billion people, but Diana couldn't bring herself to do it and stunned Phi with a taser instead. The 3 of them are able to leave the Decision Game with Sigma's consciousness presumably being SHIFTed back into the VLR timeline in the future, a failed timeline where D-END 1 couldn't be prevented.

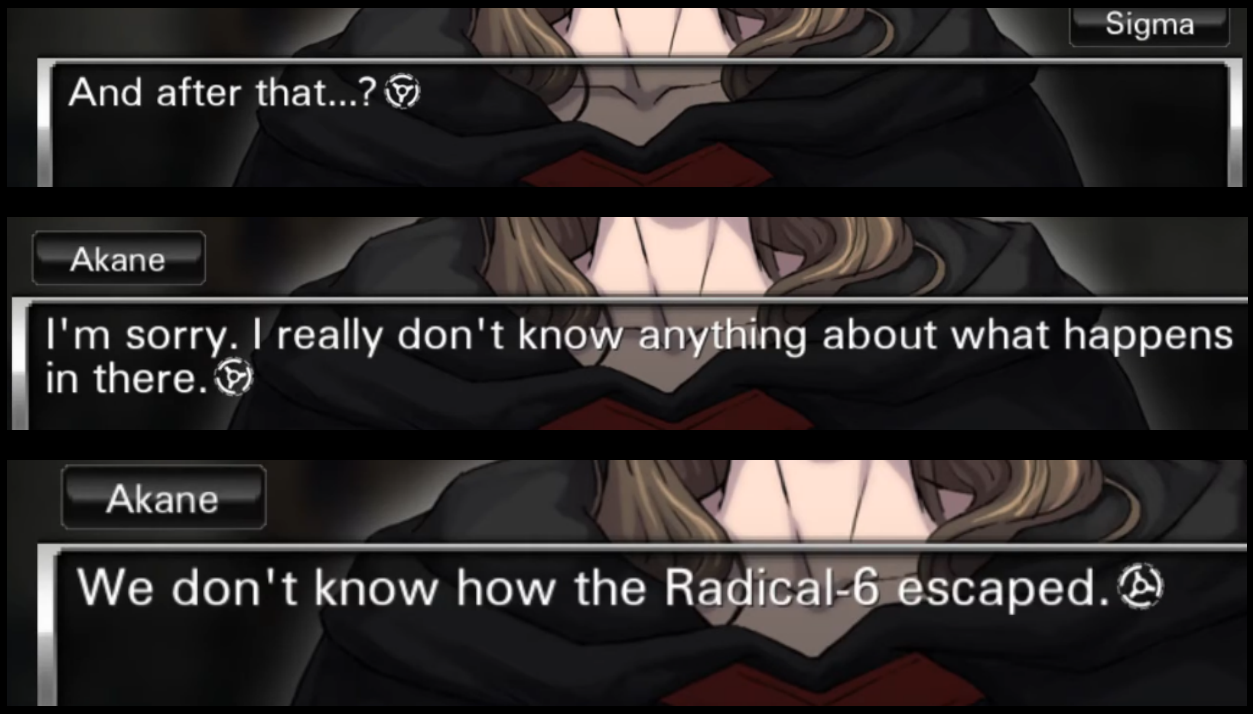
Months later, on April 13th 2029, Y.Sigma wakes up and goes through the events I already described at the end of VLR. He finds

out that one of his eyes and both his arms have been replaced by cybernetics as a result of what happened to his body during D-END 1 while O.Sigma was piloting it. This is where Diana steps in and joins Akane and Sigma just before they leave to go to the moon for the AB Project. How did Diana know about the AB Project/Where Sigma even was in the first place? Easy, it's not confirmed but it can be assumed that it was Akane herself that summoned Diana to join them for the AB Project despite Diana having no real skills that could contribute to the AB Project being built, she did it all so that Sigma would experience that tragedy that led him to create Luna. (Just a reminder, this isn't the version of Diana that had already fallen in love with Sigma, that was in another timeline. This version of Diana simply respected and cared about him. Besides, it's an entirely different Sigma that she'll spend her time on the moon with, one that's mentally 45 years younger in fact.)

Only one last thing doesn't add up, why didn't Diana use this opportunity to warn Sigma about the events that happened during The Decision Game? At the end of D-END 1, she clearly regretted not being able to kill Phi as she knew that she had likely just caused the deaths of 6 billion people by refusing to do it. I can think of only one reason as to why Diana didn't tell Sigma, because Akane threatened her not to.

Akane was the one to summon Diana to the AB Project in the first place and remember, she NEEDED D-END 1 to happen. Like hell she was just gonna let Diana spill the beans to Sigma in an attempt to do something different the next time around. So from that, I think it's safe to conclude that Akane forced Diana, likely under the threat of death, into not revealing anything about The Decision Games. Akane herself even lied to Sigma's face at the end of VLR about knowing what happened in the Mars Mission Test Site (where ZTD took place)





Liar Liar pants on fire

And with that, our circle is complete and the loop is closed. Time to explain it all from Akane's POV.

TIMELINE (AKANE'S POV):



1: Akane and Delta meet up in secret and plan the events of VLR and ZTD together using Akane's esper abilities and connection to the Morphogenetic Field.

2: Akane gasses the 22 year old Sigma Klim on Christmas Day 2028. His 22 year old consciousness is beamed into 2074 during the events of VLR while his 67 year old consciousness from the same VLR timeline AKA O.Sigma is brought into his 22 year old body.

3: The trio, Akane, Phi and Sigma, head on over to the Mars Mission Test Site which a week from now would be where Radical-6 would originate from (remember that Akane didn't tell the others that she knew about The Decision Game). A week before the Decision Game tho, the test site was just that, a test. It was apparently an

experiment to test the prolonged effects of isolation for a mission to Mars and they needed subjects to test on, this is how each member of the Decision Game got to where they were and only Akane knew what was coming. This is also how every member of the Decision Game already knew about each other before the game of ZTD starts, they had already been acquainted for a week.

4: The Decision Game occurs and D-END 1 and 2 go according to plan. Following the D-END 1 line, Diana, Phi, Sigma and Akane emerge from the Decision Games in a world that's about to fall into ruins.

5: Months later, on April 13th 2029, Y.Sigma who had just come back from VLR awakens to find himself at the ending of VLR's videogame, face to face with Akane as she explains what's about to occur. After the Decision Game, Akane had brought back Sigma's body and repaired it with cybernetics while she also worked on preparing for their journey to the moon, a process that took months. At the same time, Diana arrives at their headquarters after having survived the initial outbreak of the Radical-6 Virus; Ready to help out with the AB Project as a means to escape a planet Earth in ruins.

6: 3 years later, on the moon, Diana passes away due to a circulatory disease caused by the prolonged effects of low gravity that mysteriously didn't affect either himself or Akane. This was the incident that made him pour his grief into creating Luna and giving her Diana's Blue Bird necklace as a token.

7: 42 years later, the AB Project is completed and Y.Sigma has grown into O.Sigma. His 67 year old body is then knocked unconscious as his 67 year old consciousness is beamed back to 2028 on Christmas, ready to complete the Decision Games and stop Radical-6. At the same time, Y.Sigma's consciousness enters into O.Sigma's body and the game of VLR takes place

8: During the events of VLR, the Luna Ending happens, which was the initial seed planted into Y.Sigma's heart that ended up allowing D-END 2 to occur. After VLR happens, Y.Sigma is sent back to April 13th 2029 and the loop continues.
[EU, EF, Social Engineering, Relationship Management, Thinking, Insight, Foresight, Strategy, Planning, Manipulation, Deception, Cruelty]

CONCLUSION:

The purpose of D-END 1 and the VLR timeline as a whole acts as a sort of "backstop" to Akane's plan. If anything other than CQD Ending 2 occurs in the Decision Games then D-END 1 occurs and they try again on the next loop. At the same time, in order for the CQD Ending to even happen in the first place, both D-END 1 *and* D-END 2 would've had to occur in order for Delta to have been born and the VLR timeline to take place so he can create the Decision Game. In order for Akane to cause the loop then break it, to use VLR to destroy VLR, she needed to use Sigma Klim and Diana, putting them through a life of hell just to make sure her plan works.

She gave Sigma hope in the form of a family in D-END 2, only to make them starve to death so they can give their lives for the sake of their children. She abandoned Sigma and Diana in that room for months just to make sure it happens. The happiness that Sigma could've experienced after 45 years in service to Akane was snatched from him at the very last moment, just like in the original ending to The Blue Bird play...



And despite everything, this entire doc was all just ONE element of Akane's plan to save the world. This isn't her best Strategy feat, this isn't her best Planning feat, this is barely even her best Manipulation feat. She does unspeakable things in order to save the lives of 6 billion people and this doc is just the beginning of it. But even after all she did to Sigma and his family and to so many other

people, can she really be called evil if it was for the sake of humanity?

And with that, the analysis is over. Thank you all so much for reading and I hope this convinced some of you that I am not overrating Akane, she really is just that good ❤️

