



chapter 21:  
introspection

INT. THE WORLD BELT ARENA - RING - NIGHT

Zanom crashes down from above at Rynan's head. His body glows with a blue aura.

JAROD

Nope. Not surprised anymore. Not by this.

Zanom strikes Rynan in the forehead and knocks him out of the ring.

NARRATOR

Zanom has won the World Belt Tournament by the narrowest margin ever in the history of the event.

EXT. THE WORLD BELT ARENA - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Flash Shumway shoves a camera crew and a microphone in Zanom's face.

ZANOM

You think I'm capable of committing a horrifying mass murder and slaughtering innocent people, and yet you want to piss me off?

Flash speaks into the microphone in front of the camera.

NARRATOR

However, now he has to deal with a vicious media campaign hellbent on proving he's responsible for the Baldur Attacks.

Zanom gets in Flash's face.

ZANOM

I don't have time for these games!

Gene Stratos confronts Flash.

FLASH

I think we have everything we need to run our story.

INT. SINAI GENERAL HOSPITAL - HOSPITAL ROOM

Sora holds Zankyo while she and Zanom discuss the baby's future. Zanom briefly flashes back to his own timeline.

SORA

Zanom? Are you okay? You look like  
you've seen a ghost.

Zanom runs out of the room.

EXT. SINAI GENERAL HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Kari sits with Zanom atop the Star Runner, while he smokes a  
cigarette.

ZANOM

They've already made the first  
move. Now it's up to us to figure  
out what the next one is and stop  
it before they can make it.

NARRATOR

It doesn't look good for Humanity!  
Will Zanom and the other Kamis be  
able to stop the Crystal Dragons?  
What is Zanom's next move? It's  
Zanom VS himself today on Chronic  
Boom!

INT. RUNA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Zanom fidgets nervously, watching TV. Halo still reads his  
book.

Kari runs in through the front door and grabs the remote  
from Zanom's hand.

ZANOM

Hey! What the hell?

KARI

Shush! You need to see this!

ANGLE: THE TV.

Kari changes the channel to a popular tabloid news program.  
The program is akin to Fox News or TMZ on Earth.

Flash Shumway sits at a news desk with a VICTIM of the  
Baldur Attacks. A file photo of Zanom appears in top corner  
of the screen behind them.

ZANOM

The hell is this crap?

KARI

Shush!

FLASH

Can you describe what this creature looked like?

VICTIM

Yes, certainly. It had a tremendous, dark energy around it, so I couldn't see it very well, but I think it had to have been that guy from the finals.

FLASH

Zanom Danvers?

VICTIM

Yeah! That's the guy! He took a swipe at me, and that's how I lost my arm.

ZANOM

Oh, bullshit! That's probably one of the guys who tried to kill Mom trying to profit off of it!

HALO

Yeah, he's probably just upset at you because all of the attacks seemed targeted at you for some reason.

ANGLE: THE TV.

FLASH

Well, we managed to get an exclusive post-tournament interview with Zanom after his victory.

VICTIM

I'll bet he cheated!

ZANOM

Whose pocket are these guys in, anyhow?

FLASH

Here's the un-edited interview in its entirety.

EXT. THE WORLD BELT ARENA - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Flash shoves a microphone in Zanom's face. Flash is only seen from behind.

FLASH

Zanom, what do you have to say for yourself after ruthlessly slaughtering all of these innocent people?

ZANOM

Let's get this straight. I'm capable of committing a horrifying mass murder and slaughtering innocent people.

INT. RUNA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Kari turns to look at Zanom. Zanom's chi starts flickering.

KARI

Zanom...

ZANOM

That is so taken out of context!

ANGLE: THE TV.

The interview has ended, and Flash retakes the screen.

FLASH

Unfortunately, that was all we were able to get before the police protected him.

VICTIM

Hmph! They probably went in on this deal together or something. You know, I heard he hasn't been charged yet!

Halo turns off the TV.

HALO

Maybe that's because he saved your ass, dipshit!

KARI

Babe, are you okay?

Zanom starts flickering his aura even more.

HALO

Zanom, stay calm...

ZANOM

Fuck calm! We left calm so far away, it's never coming back! Doesn't that moron understand what would've happened if I didn't intervene? He'd be dead!

KARI

Zanom, when's the last time you've slept? You sound very tired, and your eyes are very bloodshot.

ZANOM

I haven't slept since the attacks.

HALO

Dude! That was two weeks ago!

ZANOM

I can't fall asleep. I just think about what happened, and...

HALO

Ikarin?

Zanom hangs his head a beat.

KARI

Why don't you go lie down, and we'll deal with this, okay?

ZANOM

No. I can handle this. I'm fine...

Kari pokes Zanom in the ribs, and he falls back into the couch.

ZANOM

Hey, what the hell...

KARI

Just as I thought. Zanom, you're exhausted! You can't even stand up to me, much less this ass-hole! Forget about the Crystal Dragons! Please, go get some rest.

HALO

I'd do what she says if I were you.

Zanom stares at Kari a beat.

ZANOM

What are you going to do if I  
don't?

Zanom tries to stand up, but Kari pushes him back down.

ZANOM

Where did all this backbone come  
from, so suddenly?

KARI

Not in the mood...

ZANOM

Neither am I!

Zanom attempts to push Kari out of his way, but Kari puts  
him in a sleeper hold.

KARI

If you won't sleep by yourself,  
I'll just have to force you to get  
some rest...

Zanom struggles but loses consciousness rather quickly. Kari  
lets go of his throat and catches him as he falls.

HALO

Need help getting him to bed?

KARI

No, I got it.

INT. THE WORLD BELT ARENA - RING - NIGHT

The ring is filled with a thick fog.

Zanom awakens to find himself in the center of the ring,  
tied and gagged much like Runa was by the terrorists.

He notices Aizen at one end of the ring, getting ready to  
fight Ikarin at the other end.

Aizen and Ikarin struggle against each other over Zanom, as  
he struggles to free himself to no avail.

Suddenly, a dark beam of energy shoots both Aizen and Ikarin  
in their heads. Both of them fall lifeless.

Another Zanom walks up to the bound Zanom. The bound Zanom  
struggles harder, but the harder he struggles, the tighter  
the ropes become.

ZANOM #2  
What's the difference?

Zanom #2 points his finger at the bound Zanom and fires off another energy beam.

INT. RUNA'S APARTMENT - ZANOM'S BED - AFTERNOON

Zanom bursts awake in a cold sweat, SCREAMING. He looks around to find himself in a safe place.

Kari runs in to check on him.

KARI  
Zanom, are you okay? You must have had a nightmare!

Zanom still pants heavily.

ZANOM  
Yeah, I guess so. What happened?

KARI  
You got some rest, Babe.

ZANOM  
(angrily)  
Why did you do that?

KARI  
I was just trying to help.

ZANOM  
And what about Shumway? Whatever happened to him?

KARI  
General Stratos ended up happily executing the arrest warrant on several charges of tampering with police evidence and impeding a police investigation. That guy on his show, as it would turn out, was wanted on three planets for child po...

ZANOM  
So, that's one situation that dealt with itself.

Zanom starts reaching for a clean shirt.



KARI  
Actually...

The doorbell rings.

ZANOM  
What, now?

INT. RUNA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Zanom drinks from a mug of coffee, standing by the kitchen counter. Gene sits at the table.

GENE  
This is very bad, Zanom.

ZANOM  
I thought we had more time!

GENE  
So did those people who died on that ship, last night.

ZANOM  
Okay, so we find Rynan and Ky, and we...

GENE  
You really think attacking them head-on is going to work? We know how they operate now. They're making a mess, looking for you. Some of my colleagues want me to get a warrant for the Baldur Attacks.

ZANOM  
You don't honestly buy into all that, do you?

GENE  
We're still analyzing the tapes. So far, we've got nothing on you except for the murders of the actual terrorists. We're willing to overlook that.

A beat.

GENE  
Zanom, be prepared that this could get even uglier for you than you ever thought it could.

ZANOM

Give me the opportunity to take them down. If I fail, I'll take the full blame for what they've done.

GENE

Is that a wise decision?

ZANOM

They came here, looking for me. They're killing innocent bystanders, trying to get my attention. Well, now they've got it. If I fail to stop them at this point, I'm just as responsible for this mess as they are.

GENE

Zanom...

ZANOM

No, hear me out, General. I failed to stop Yinaku, I let them out of Jigoku, and I let them go for a full year. I think I played a hand in this, too.

GENE

I hope you know what you're doing...

ZANOM

Not entirely.

A beat.

ZANOM

In my timeline, Yinaku destroyed everything that ever mattered to me and to everyone I've ever cared about. I'm not about to let it happen again.

GENE

I just thought I'd let you know where we stand.

Gene gets up to leave. Zanom takes another swig of his coffee.

ZANOM

Thank you. I appreciate it.

The two shake hands and leave the room.

On the kitchen table, Gene has left a copy of the morning newspaper. The front headline reads, "More Terrorist Attacks! Possible Link to Strongest in Galaxy, Zanom Danvers."

A picture of wreckage is prominently displayed across the front page, under the headline. Next to it, is a photo of Ikarin with a photo of Zanom for comparison.

NARRATOR

It looks like the Crystal Dragons have taken the fight to the next level! Will Zanom be able to stop them and clear his name? Or will he succumb to their smear campaign before the real fight begins? Next time on Chronic Boom, a major secret is revealed that could change everything. What could it be? Find out next time on Chronic Boom!

FADE OUT