

## Thomas Bartholomew Byrne

Thomas came from a well-to-do family the next town over. He'd heard about the Church of Shining Light and thought their ideas were absolutely marvelous. His parents attended church themselves, but there was no passion in them or the rest of the flock for the Word, and so when Thomas learned of the Church of Shining Light, faith was given a whole new meaning and context for him, for now it had not only passion, but power as well.

Thomas collected and read all the literature he could that the Church of Shining Light distributed, but as he wasn't a citizen of Chaston, he wasn't able to collect that much of it, and was only able to learn about sermons from those citizens of Chaston who had daily business in Thomas' town.

After having an argument about the Church's misguided message, Thomas was sure his parents could not and would not ever change their minds about the church, and so Thomas decided to run off to Chaston where he was sure the message of loving embrace would be extended to a faithful soul such as he.

And so Thomas ran away from home one bright evening when he knew he'd be able to see his way along the roads. He packed some of his things, saddled his trusted mare, and cantered off to Chaston.

It was nearly dawn before Thomas and his horse reached the outskirts of Chaston. Dirty and exhausted, Thomas climbed off the mare and walked her the rest of the way into town, which was just beginning to stir as he arrived.

Unsure where exactly to find the Church of Shining Light, Thomas wandered through the small, one-road town that was Chaston, and before long he came upon a quaint place that he felt somehow called out to him from the ether.

Taking this as a sign, Thomas headed over to the building only to discover it was indeed the Church of Shining light. And just his luck - a sermon was at that very moment beginning. Some of Chaston's devout were already heading inside to worship. Thomas took this as a most fortuitous sign, hitched his mare to the post outside the church, and headed inside to experience the light he had for so long desired to bathe within.

The Church welcomed Thomas into their flock with open arms and members of the church even gave him places to stay. Thomas joined the church as one of its members and moved quickly up its ranks for his devotion and willingness to do whatever necessary to elevate the church in the eyes of God.

Thomas' devotion and his steady rise in the ranks of the church caught the eyes of the church's leaders, the Holy Six. They took Thomas under their direct tutelage and conditioned him to be the perfect vessel to accept the Holy Spirit. Thomas couldn't be more excited to become the vessel for their Lord.

In his heart of hearts, Thomas hoped that by inviting the Lord's spirit into his body, he would gain some of the power of the Lord, and that he would lead the congregation, just as he'd always dreamed. He had no idea what was in store for him, or how little he knew.

When Thomas' body was readied and so too were all the preparations for the ritual, he met the members of the Holy Six in a special subterranean chamber beneath the Church's pulpit. No other members of the church were present, but Thomas wasn't concerned.

The Holy Six welcomed Thomas and thanked him for coming. They undressed him and stood him within the center of the chamber. The Holy Six stood around Thomas in the shape of a star. They began chanting from books they held, and after a moment Thomas began to feel something.

But what Thomas felt didn't match his visions of what the presence of God entering his body should feel like. No, it felt as though something was taking over his mind, his body, his entire being. He tried to scream and to move, but was paralyzed. After fighting in intense pain for what felt like an eternity as the chanting surrounded his senses, Thomas suddenly found himself - his spirit - ejected into the ether. He could see himself flailing away from his own body, but had no power over his environment, no way of creating locomotion of any sort.

And so, Thomas, or what was left of him, drifted through the chaos that is intangible space without a body. Energies of all kinds surrounded him in ways he would only come to understand with the large amounts of time he would spend in this abyssal state.