

direct result of a similar problem with the North Fountain teleport. All that's really known is that, whatever *did* happen to the South Fountain teleport, it didn't malfunction in any *ordinary* way. This... well, *this* was spectacular.

On the day on which it happened, Acolyte Nicci was standing all alone at the Help Desk. It was a opening day, she was on help shift and all... was still. It wasn't an ordinary stillness, either. Everything wasn't *totally* quiet. If one staid one's ears in just the right manner, at just the right angle, the strains of conversation and merriment could just barely be detected, borne by the north wind from off the Bar-L Bar. As it was, that slight bit of noise made the place seem all the lonelier. By subconsciously reminding her of what was going on just two doors to the north, the noises made the Help Room itself seem all the more empty by comparison. Even ESP activity was incredibly light, just the occasional page from someone needing a question answered or, what was really bad, wondering where the action was. Action indeed. Little did she realize that these would be the last pages she would answer for a long, long while.

Between the time during which she counted the number of tokens in her pocket by threes and the time during which she would have tested seeing precisely how many chests could be nested one inside the other, she got a page. Name: Ralph. From Cypress Street. Likely just off the boat. Wanted to know where the action was. She laughed out loud. It was her chance. She wouldn't just tell him how to get there, she'd actually take him. It wouldn't take more than ten minutes. Cypress Steet's right by South Teleport. She'd nip on out, collect him and have him follow to the teleporter. And then, well, she'd accompany him through "just to make sure he got there okay." A few minutes, a piece of pizza and a quick glass of companionship later and she'd be back at the Visitor's Center before anyone came by. With a lighthearted step she walked out the door, calling back laughingly to the Help Desk behind her "Hold my calls!"

The trip from the VC to Ralph's location was an easy one. Down, Down, Left, Left revealed Ralph; a bald-headed man who looked vaguely like The Doctor from Voyager. His first words were in allcaps; never a good sign. There was one other avatar in the room when Nicci arrived; a female with a Heroine head who was just on her way out. Ralph screamed out "C U L8R" after her as she left. Truth be known, the departing lady hadn't meant to be roped into conversation with Ralph. But, well, something about Ralph made him just want to *talk*. No matter how you tried to weasel out of it he persisted. If you tried to leave he played hurt. If you made conversation he'd blithely continue along with his own words ignoring yours until you started talking about what *he* wanted. The departing female was quite glad that someone, *anyone*, else had arrived on the scene to occupy his mind and that she could just leave and find out what all this fuss going on at the Bar-L Bar was about. She exited to the north, into South Fountain.

Meanwhile Nicci continued to try to get Ralph to follow her to the teleport. The conversation went something like this:

NICCI: "So, do you want to go to the Bar-L Bar?"

RALPH: "WHERE R U FROM"

NICCI: "Toronto. If we take the teleport it won't be far."

RALPH: "KEWL HOW OLD R U"

