

# Meptang, Merchant of Chains



Regent King of Salmagundi Roger IV ascended to the throne on a platform of accessibility to the people, so he personally entertained his share of door-to-door salespersons. They peddled everything from chariot wheel covers to wash-and-wear cerements to ribald hieroglyphic decals, but, so far as he knew, Meptang was the first chain merchant. Falafel, Roger's chief of security (and the only guy he knew who could wear a sequin-studded skirt and look good in it), suspected that Meptang's wares were actually shackles and that he'd escaped from a chain gang. However, the merchant's smooth delivery soon had Falafel and everyone else in the palace hall clamoring for a host of chain-based products, including letters, mail, saws, and link fence. And like any good chain reaction, one sale led to another, which led to another, which induced scads more. Only Queen Hatshepzammer was disinclined to shop. She was attracted more to Meptang's manly demeanor than she was to his product line. Sidling salaciously up to him, she grabbed a link that was wrapped around his neck, and yanked him close to her. "Lookin' for a good time?" she hissed in his ear. "Then meet me by the Shrine of Vargoth tonight at dusk. And leave your chains on!" Meptang concluded his business with Roger and his attendants, then hastily departed. What should he do? He found the queen about as alluring as a nest of noisy vipers. And yet he'd heard tales of other men who'd spurned her winding up as hors d'oeuvres for the Great Mesopotamian Star Weasel. What should he *do*?! (Note: All reasonable proposals considered.)