



Attila the Hunk

BY TOM CHAFFIN

"ATTILA'S RESIDENCE . . . WAS MADE OF polished boards, and surrounded with wooden enclosures, designed not so much for protection as for appearance's sake."

—the Roman envoy Priscus, A.D. 448, after visiting Attila the Hun

"Home is where the heart is," says Attila the Hun, dressed casually today in a mice-skin leisure suit for an exclusive interview here at his secluded Danube River retreat. Given the Hun's preference for natural fabrics, it comes as no surprise that—like the renowned plunderer himself—the single-story house is unpretentious, understated, yet somehow one of a kind. Natural light, and lots of it, gives the place a warm, inviting ambiance. "I suppose it's my Asian steppes heritage," speculates the Splendid One. "All those treeless plains of my youth gave me a lifelong appreciation for decor that's simple, and light that's natural and free."

Beyond the ubiquitous human skulls that accent its rooms, the house's appointments betray no hint that its owner presides over one of the world's most notorious barbaric empires. From the Baltic to the Mediterranean, the mere mention of Attila's name strikes a very special kind of terror in the hearts of all. In recent months, however, prompted perhaps by his intuition that if he wishes to be loved as well as feared, he needs to soften his image a bit, the Hun has been aggressively courting scholars and scribes alike.

Turns out, there is indeed another side to the so-called Scourge of God. Says one of his neighbors: "The pri-

vate Attila is not the one you read about in all the epics." Call him a great big hunk of fun, if you wish, because around here the swarthy invader is better known for his awesome dinner parties and tireless work for causes like Habitat for Inhumanity than for his bloody conquests.

And yet, The-One-Who-Never-Showers is hard put to conceal the fact that he's still basking in the glow of his recent victory over the Byzantine army at Gallipoli. "The public sees only the destruction and killing—the glamour end of the job," he says. "They're totally unaware of what goes into these things. Does anyone truly believe sacking campaigns come off by accident? That all the horses, all the soldiers—I call them my associates—and everything else you need just happen to show up outside Rome at the same time? No way! There's a helluva lot of prep work in this racket."

Then the Hun catches himself. "But hey, this is downtime," he says with a disarming chuckle. "With my work, I'm on the road a lot. So when I'm here, I really want to get away from all of that and just, like, chill."

Although his busy, if-it's-Tuesday-

this-must-be-Thessaly schedule does not leave much room for hobbies, the A-Man has been devoting more and more time of late to a long-standing labor of love. When completed, his Great Steppes Heritage Museum and Theme Park will house Attila's vast collection of souvenirs, which range from wooden clubs and Roman sandals to the latest version of his "Just Sack It" T-shirts.

As the interview draws to a close, this ultimate self-starter grows pensive. "The steppes have given me so much," he reflects. "All I'm looking for now is the chance to give something in return. Like anyone else in public life, I want to be able to look back at the end of my career and say, 'Yes, I truly made a difference.'" 

