

# GOLDEN HORDE



The year is 1247. Berke, Great Khan of the Golden Horde, comes across a girl in the steppe. The Khan's virility is long gone, but the young and beautiful stranger gives him new hope. He is going to take her as his wife and she is going to give birth to their son, the long-expected male heir of the Mongolian empire.

**Genre:**  
Period Drama

**Production:**  
16 x 1 Commercial hour

**Duration:**  
Weekly, Prime Time

**Channel:**  
Channel One



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Berke's soldiers murder merchant Kerim and his sons, and take his daughter, seventeen-year-old Aijan, to the Court of the Great Khan of the Golden Horde. Berke orders the wedding preparation to be started.

The Great Khan's second wife, jealous and passionate Kekhar-Khatun, decides to eliminate the new rival by any means possible. She helps the girl to escape from the Great Khan's Court, but Aijan is found. Smitten with her, the Great Khan pardons the escapee after learning that her chastity is still intact.

During that time, the Great Khan's nephew, Khan Mengu Timur, arrives with his embassy to Russia, the Mongolian tributary at the time. Mengu is a potential heir to the Great Khan's throne, and is greeted accordingly. Mengu demands that Yaroslav, Grand Prince of Russia, should furnish 40,000 Russian men to replenish Mongolian troops before they start a war against Persian Khan Hulagu, Berke's old foe.

Boris, Prince of Suzdal, is also present in the Grand Prince's chambers with his spouse Ustinya. Boris holds a grudge against his junior brother Yaroslav, who passed him over in succession to the throne. Mengu Khan's attention is riveted by Boris's wife, smart and gorgeous Ustiniya, as Grand Prince Yaroslav asks the Khan to soften his stance. The Khan then makes his demand known: he will accept a reinforcement of twenty thousand men if Prince Boris's wife is added to the deal. Yaroslav turns down the offer, which would bring the entire dynasty into disrepute, but Boris, eager to ingratiate himself with the future heir to the Mongolian throne, gifts his wife to Mengu. On his voyage back to the Golden Horde, Mengu is also accompanied by Nastya, whose merchant husband Ivan was carried off in captivity to the Horde four years earlier, and young Nikolka, an ikon-painter's apprentice, whose job is to decorate the White Mosque, the crown jewel of the Khan's new capital. Nastya disguises herself as a soldier to sneak her way into the Khan's retinue, her heart palpitating at the thought she might be uncovered.

Mengu-Timur and his retinue are back at the Court on the eve of the wedding day. Jealous Kekhar sets fire to the bride's dress during the wedding celebration. To save Aijan, the guards pull off the veil of her face. Nikolka the artist is dumbstruck by the beauty of the Khan's young wife, and deeply moved by the sadness in her large eyes.

Kekhar-Khatun is executed. Her true maid Saadat vows revenge against the Great Khan's young wife.

Ustinya receives a harsh welcome in Mengu Timur's harem. Ush Khatun, Tengu's ambitious and stern mother, is incensed at her son's decision to marry the Russian wench, which might cause him to fall permanently from Great Khan Berke's grace. She strips Ustinya of her maid and her possessions and brands her a slave on her shoulder.



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Aijan cannot restore Berke's virility. She keeps her virginity on their first night, but a chagrined Khan whips her half to death. Weary of life, Aijan loses all will to live and refuses all food and drink. A contrite Khan is desperate, but the doctor hints that his young spouse needs positive emotions to regain the zest. Zeynab, Aijan's maid, has had a chance to meet Nikolka and shows Aijan his work. Aijan begs the Khan to allow her to sit for the Russian artist. Berke objects at first, but agrees after the astrologer tells him that his young wife is going to bear him a son. Nikolka and Aijan fall in love.

Grand Prince Yaroslav is getting introduced to the girls that Mengu Timur brought as gifts from the Horde. Gorgeous Nargiz holds Yaroslav in his thrall although he might have difficulty acknowledging it to everyone including himself, since in his lasting, church-sanctified marriage to Princess Radmilla he is blessed with their beloved son Daniil.



Daniil is Yaroslav's younger son, whose existence mars the relationship between the Grand Prince and his elder son, Prince Vladimir of Novgorod. Vladimir's attitude to Daniil is that of rivalry, both the sibling and the succession-to-the-throne kind. Vladimir puts up his younger brother to breaking in a wild horse, gifted by the Horde ambassador. Overhearing that, Nargiz, who has a way with horses, saves the boy. Fearful that Nargiz may reveal to the Grand Prince that he set up the boy to be killed, Vladimir decides to send an assassin, the local fool completely loyal to him. Yaroslav's Commander Yeremey is smitten with Nargiz but his feelings go completely unrequited as Nargiz is in love with the Grand Prince. Yeremey decides to sneak up on her in the baths, thinking that a ravaged girl will then be forced to marry him. In the baths, however, Yeremey sees the local fool attempt to rape Nargiz and saves her. The maid sees Nargiz and Yeremey leave the baths, and Radmilla makes sure that the word reaches Yaroslav's ears. Believing the rumours, he orders Nargiz to be married off to Yeremey. Yet, after Nargiz comes to him confessing her love and telling him about her chastity, the Grand Prince feels in no position to let anyone else but himself have her. He sends Nargiz to the monastery even though that might put a strain on Yeremey's loyalty, and leaves on a campaign against the Kipchack tribes, who have laid siege to Novgorod and are eager to take revenge against his son Vladimir for devastating their lands.

Having routed the Kipchak force and being elated by his surviving and winning the battle, Yaroslav goes to the monastery to see Nargiz, only to find that the girl escaped. The Grand Prince tracks Nargiz down to a lodge in the woods, spending the happiest night of his life with her. When he brings Nargiz to the city of Vladimir, he is horrified to learn that his younger son Daniil is captured by the Kipchaks. He hurries to his son's rescue while Nargiz is left in the city that hates her, at the mercy of Radmilla who prepared to murder her rival.



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