

## **The Ninth Gate**

Story Beats by D. McClellan

1. A man, Telfer, writes a letter at his desk in his enormous private library, seals the letter in an envelope, then straps a noose around his neck and hangs himself. The camera dollies into his bookshelf - Credit sequence – camera moving through doors.
2. In the Upper East Side of Manhattan, CORSO, a used book broker, swindles a family for a rare 4-volume edition of Don Quixote. His colleague passes him in the hall calls him unscrupulous and a culture that would stoop to anything.
3. At Bernie's used books – Corso asks Bernie to help him sell the volumes for a fee. Bernie tells him that people are complaining about him calling him a money grubbing bastard. He lowballs Bernie for a 10% finder's fee and shows him the books. Bernie is impressed.
4. Corso walks in the Balkan Enterprises building – then barges in on Boris Balkan in the middle of giving a lecture on the Devil to a half full classroom. Balkan knows much about the devil and witchcraft – Corso falls asleep. Their relationship is established as a strictly business oriented. Balkan talks of Corso's reputation in the book business and pontificates about Corso's morality asking him if he sleeps well at night. Balkan refers to Corso as a "lean, hungry, restless type, the kind who put the wind up Julius Caesar – men who stab their friends in the back". Corso yawns at the description and asks why he called him there. Balkan asks if Corso likes him. Corso tells him that he is there for strictly business – doesn't have to like him because he is a client who pays well - and to keep his opinions to himself.
5. Balkan shows Corso his private library that contains only books whose protagonist is the Devil. Balkan reveals his edition of the Nine Gates of the Kingdom Of Shadows – an infamous book of which Corso reels off the author and the date of it's writing – stating that the author – the Ariste de Torque was burned at the stake in Venice 1666 and that only three copies survived. Fargas, Kessler and Adelpia. Balkan tells him that he bought his copy from Telfer the day before he killed himself and that he suspects only one copy of the three is authentic. Corso notes the books intricate engravings, which have Latin sub text. Balkan tells Corso that the engravings were adapted from a book written by the devil himself – the Delomonomicum and that they form a satanic puzzle intended to raise the Devil. Balkan asks if Corso believes in the supernatural. Corso tells him he believes in his percentage. Balkan wants Corso to investigate and compare the three known books to authenticate his copy. Balkan hands him a check and tells him that if Corso finds that if any one of the three is authentic he wants him to get it at all costs. Corso mentions the danger. Balkan tells him to do a good job and he'll double the check.
6. Corso looks over the book and it's engravings in his apartment.

7. Corso goes to Telfer's house and asks Mrs. Telfer to identify the book. She tells him that the sale is news to her and that her husband loved the book. She calls him a book detective and tells him that her husband paid a great deal of money for the book in Spain. Corso asks if her late husband tried to use the book – and she laughs saying whatever he was up to he never used the book. On his way out he sees a black man with platinum hair staring at him from a park bench.
8. Corso studies the engravings in the library and translates the Latin inscriptions. Corso sees a woman behind the bookcase spying on him and tries to locate her in the library to no avail. He continues his research on the engravings.
9. Corso returns home and his place has been ransacked.
10. Corso shows the book to Bernie and asks him to stash the book until he leaves for France. Bernie is in awe of the engravings. Through the window we see a man throw down a cigarette butt – then a woman – seconds behind him stomp it out.
11. Mrs. Telfer shows up at Corso's apartment and proposes to get the book back – that her husband loved it. She seduces him and proposes a scandal to steal the book from Balkan for money. He refuses. She makes love. She asks for the book and he insults her – she attacks him and hits him on the head with a bottle knocking him out cold.
12. Corso, with an ice pack on his head calls Bernie who is not there. He goes to pick up the book and finds Bernie dead, hanging just like the engraving he was marveling at in the book. Corso sneaks past his friend's body and finds the book behind the secret panel in the wall.
13. Corso instructs his cab driver to pull over at a phone booth where he calls Balkan and demands to be put through to talk to him. Corso relates Bernie's death and says he wants out. Balkan tells him to proceed as arranged and tack another zero on to his fee. Airport noise is heard on Balkan's end. Corso asks where he is – Balkan hangs up.
14. On the plane Corso studies the engraving that depicts his friend's death scene.
15. In Portugal – Corso inquires about the Book from the booksellers who sold it to Telfer. They reveal that it was Mrs. Telfer who made him buy the book and that she fell in love with it. Corso asks about it being a possible forgery and they discredit this with facts about forging a book. Corso asks about the engravings and their meaning. They show him that 3 of the nine pictures are signed by LCF instead of AT and tell him that the man who wrote the book was in alliance with the Devil and went to the stake for it.
16. On the way out of the building a huge scaffolding collapses around Corso almost killing him. He escapes unscathed.

17. Corso now on a train studies the engravings and notices the resemblance of a figure to the men in the bookstore. Corso sees the woman in the library on the train and confronts her. Beth calls him the quiet type – he tells her to give his regards to Balkan.
18. Corso takes a private cab to a castle in the French countryside to visit the owner of the second copy, Fargas. His chateau nearly empty, Fargas shows Corso his copy of the ninth gates. They compare the books in detail noting imperfections in text and paper. Corso asks to stay and examine them together in detail Fargas tells him that some books are dangerous and not to be opened with impunity.
19. Corso studies the engravings and notes discrepancies in the engravings labeled LCF. He makes a list of the engravings in each book and notes that 3 labeled LCF are a different 3 in each book.
20. Corso is nearly run over by a black man with white platinum hair as he leaves the chateau – the man is scared off by a woman on a motorcycle who chases him off, leaving Corso alone.
21. Corso notices Beth in his hotel dining room, reading. She is elusive to his questions telling him she likes books and has been travelling a while. Corso gets a call from Balkan asking for progress and transfers the call to his room. In his room Corso tells Balkan of the discrepancies between his and the Fargas copy. Balkan insists that Corso get the book at any cost.
22. Beth awakens Corso in his room before dawn and takes him on her motorcycle to Fargas' chateau. Fargas is lying dead in his koi pond. Beth is elusive and tells Corso that he is wasting time with his inquiries about what happened and whom she is working for. Beth shows him the way in by climbing the trestle and jumping in a window. She opens the door for Corso who tells her to 'wait here'. Corso finds the book smoldering in the fireplace and the engravings missing. He accuses Beth of knowing too much – and she tells him that there is a flight from Lisbon to Paris at noon.
23. On the plane Corso calls Beth his guardian angel and tells her that someone is playing a game with him. She replies "of course they are, you're part of it and you are beginning to like it.
24. Corso checks into his Paris Hotel where the staff knows him. In his room he studies the burned copy of the book with his own.
25. Corso visits Baroness Kessler at her corporate building. She is in a wheelchair and has a very butch looking secretary that puts off Corso. Kessler has heard of Corso and is fond of his reputation as a hard-nosed book finder. Corso knows her library by heart and asks about her copy of the 9<sup>th</sup> gates. Baroness is writing a book about the devil. She wrote a biography about Torquea and tells the story of how he came across

the Delomonomicum, the original book that the 9<sup>th</sup> Gates is based on and how he died for the sake of the book. A secret society was founded, the order of the silver serpent, a witches coven, that has been devolved through the years into a rich social orgy. She informs him that they will be meeting very soon – and that Leanna Telfer uses her book since she dropped out. She confirms Leanna Telfer's interest in the book by defining her as a money grubbing aristocrat who married Telfer for his money and used him to get her family out of debt. Corso informs Kessler that he killed himself last week. When asked who Corso is working for, he declines. Kessler becomes angry when she guesses that it is Balkan and insults him, telling him to get out – calling him a wolf in sheep's clothing. Her knowledge of the book and of the Devil is profound, having seen him once when she was a child. She tells him he doesn't know what he's getting himself into and to get out before it's too late.

26. Corso exits but is followed by the black man. He ducks into a café and watches from inside until the man leaves several hours later.
27. Corso exits the café and is chased by a car. He runs down steps evading capture and is then attacked by the black man. Beth floats down the steps and comes to Corso's rescue by saving the book and beating up the black man. Corso's glasses are smashed. Beth has a bloody nose, which Corso accidentally gave to her in the melee.
28. At the hotel Corso describes Leanna Telfer and her black counterpart and asks the deskman to inquire which hotel she is staying. He tells him that her maiden name is St. Marten and pays him.
29. Corso stares into Beth's eyes as he thanks her for saving him. She wipes her blood onto his forehead in three lines. He insists she tell him what is going on – but Balkan phones – and Corso transfers the call to reception to take it.
30. Corso relates that Fargas has been murdered and that someone snatched the engravings and tried to burn the book. Balkan inquires about the Kessler copy and insists that he must authenticate it regardless of her secretary.
31. Corso makes photocopies of the engravings in his book behind the front desk. Upon returning to his room, Beth is gone without trace. Corso hides the book behind the refrigerator and makes a drink.
32. Corso waits for the secretary's lunch break to visit Kessler. He sneaks upstairs and shows the Baroness his pictures of the engravings as a peace offering. She lets him in and after his apology and her inspection of the engravings and his explanation of the differences in detail, she is sufficiently impressed to let him study her copy against the Balkan copies. Corso suggests that perhaps Torquea hid the secret of the 9 gates over the three books instead of just in one. Corso inspects the Kessler copy and pulls out a postcard of a castle with Boris Balkan's writing on the back to Kessler. He passes this off and notes his hunch is correct about the final three engravings and the

LCF markings in the Kessler copy. He marks his chart. He is hit on the head and passes out.

33. Upon awaking he finds the Baroness dead in her wheelchair and her place on fire. He scrambles for her copy of the book, which is deep in flames and runs out of the building, knocking over her secretary, returning from lunch. The building burns as he makes his way down the street.
34. Corso returns to his hotel to find Balkan's copy of the book has been taken from behind the refrigerator. He inquires at the front desk where they tell him that his wife was here. Balkan calls him at the front desk and asks him for the news. Corso tells him of Kessler's death and her book. Balkan tells him his job is done and all he has to do is return the book to him and pick up his check. Corso tells him about his missing book. Balkan threatens him to get his book back or else. Beth shows up and Corso accuses her, grabbing her. She fends him off with little effort and asks the front desk people if she is the one who posed as his wife. They describe Leanna Telfer in detail and then pass a note saying that she is staying at the Ritz across town.
35. Beth and Corso arrive at Telfer's hotel in time to see her checking out with her black boyfriend. Beth steals a Ferrari and they tail Telfer's car into the countryside. They pass the Telfer car dressed like sheik and must backtrack when Telfer exits unexpectedly. Caught behind a truck, they lose sight of Telfer's car and must pick which way to go, left or right. Corso tells her to pick. Thinking they have lost them for good, Corso tells Beth to turn the car around and go the other way. Beth remembers Telfer's maiden name is St. Marten as she sees a sign for a town with the same name 5 kilometers ahead.
36. In town Corso inquires a local baker about directions to the St. Marten Chateau.
37. At the Chateau gates, candles have been lit and guests are arriving for a party. Beth drives past the gates and parks the car off the road. Corso and Beth sneak through the woods onto the property and see the guests arriving dressed in black robes with suitcases. They sneak up to the house and climb the trellis to see inside. A group of people in black robes has gathered in a large room. They climb up to Leanna's bedroom and spy on her changing clothes. She puts on a black robe and a pentagram necklace.
38. Corso breaks the glass and confronts Leanna Telfer about stealing his client's book. Corso tears apart her room looking for the book. Leanna tells him her husband gave it to her and had no right to sell it. Corso replies that he probably sold it to get back at her for cheating on him with that albino. He grabs the book and tells Beth to hold her back. The albino walks in and Leanna runs to pick up a gun. Corso gives the book back to the albino and he strikes him. Leanna tells him not to kill them up here. He leads them downstairs at gunpoint into a dungeon like room. On the steps, Corso makes his move and grabs the gun from his hands and flips him over, killing him with his bare hands.

39. The sect of the Silver Serpent is underway with Leanna Telfer reading from her copy as Corso, dressed in the Albino's robes sneaks into the crowd. Beth stays back and watches from the side as Balkan barges in and steps on stage calling everyone in the room a bunch of buffoons. He grabs the book and admits that he alone is the one who is worthy of using and understanding its depth and power. Leanna grabs him and he throws her down calling her a charlatan. She attacks him and he strangles her to death with her pentagram necklace in front of the crowd. Beth stops Corso from intervening. Balkan scares the crowd and they disperse frantically as he walks away with his book calmly. Beth tells Corso that he is off the hook for the other murders since Balkan just committed murder in front of a room full of people. "You're out of a job and free... What more do you want?" Corso runs after Balkan saying "you know what I want..."
40. Corso misses Balkan and grabs a Rolls Royce from the lot. As Beth comes out with his bag asking if he is going to give her a ride Corso accuses her of working for Balkan the whole time. She tells him that's funny, since he was the one working for Balkan the whole time. Corso tears off after Balkan without her. Beth watches him go as flames reflect in her eyes. (END OF ACT)
41. Corso tails Balkan into the countryside of France, losing him as they cross a river that is too deep for Corso's Rolls. He gets out, leaving the car mid stream and finds a gun in his jacket pocket – Beth put it there.
42. Corso eats at an inn and finds the postcard of the Castle he found in Kessler's copy amongst his things. He inquires with the owners of the inn and they show him a guide where the castle is on a map.
43. Corso hitchhikes – first in a logging truck, then in the back of a goat farmer's truck deep into the remote countryside. They drive through a rainbow.
44. Corso walks up to the castle at dusk and sees Balkan's Land Rover parked outside. He enters quietly and follows the whispering voices to the center tower.
45. Corso interrupts Balkan as he spreads out the nine engravings on a table and begins his ceremony alone. Balkan tells him that he is not wanted here and that a check is waiting for him at his New York Office. Corso tells Balkan that he wants the engravings – that Balkan killed for them and they are worth more than money. Balkan tells Corso he has developed the same obsession and that he has a soft spot for him. Corso pulls a gun and tells him that he is not leaving without the engravings. After a brief tussle over the gun, Balkan shoves Corso into the ancient wooden flooring and tosses his gun aside. He tells him Corso can watch as he pours a circle of gasoline around himself and begins his ritual. Corso struggles to get out of his hole in the floor as Balkan smashes a lamp and ignites the gasoline. He talks like a madman as he plunges his hands in fire and claims to feel no heat – that he is invulnerable and can float on air and walk in water. Corso provokes him to do another trick and Balkan

pours gasoline over himself. He feels nothing for a few seconds and then begins to burn and scream. Corso falls through the floor and runs upstairs to the table grabbing the engravings before they catch fire. As Balkan screams in agony, Corso grabs his gun off the floor and shoots him. Mercy kill.

46. Corso exits the castle as flames fly out of the turrets. He watches it burn from inside the Land Rover and is startled as Beth appears in the front seat next to him. She kisses him. They make love in front of the burning castle and her appearance is that of a demon against the flames.
47. Corso drives and asks Beth is that it? Why didn't it work for Balkan. She informs him that the ninth engraving was a forgery. He asks where it is and she tells him that he is running low on gas.
48. At a gas station Corso walks out of the restroom to find Beth gone again and a note written on the forged ninth engraving: Ceniza Bros.
49. Corso arrives at Ceniza Bros bookstore, which is being torn down and asks the workmen what happened – but no one speaks English there. The men tear down the last bookshelf where the true ninth engraving on a piece of old paper falls to the ground at Corso's feet - stuck on top of the dusty cabinet. On the engraving is a picture of Beth riding naked on a Hydra in front of the castle.
50. The picture of the castle dissolves into the real thing as the doors open and light floods the entrance. Corso walks into the Ninth gate.