

The Secret Adventures of Jules

Verne

A Shadow's Shadow: Cavois

Cavois (portrayed by René Auberjonois) appears in two of the 22 episodes of the Steampunk TV show “The Secret Adventures of Jules Verne” that ran in 2000.

Cavois is a mysterious villain whose goal is to kill Phileas and Rebecca Fogg but in such a manner that he reminds one of Moriarty, Sherlock Holmes' dearest enemy.

In order to get the best overview possible of this fascinating villain, the two episodes in which he appears will be analyzed separately. Another reason for this is that the first episode shows a powerful character who is in every way superior to Phileas Fogg while in the second episode it's the opposite.

The Cardinal's Design

- *Who is Cavois?*

The first scene of the episode shows a mysterious man writing on paper while at

the same time a scorpion is about to kill Rebecca. This is the first encounter with Cavois which says already a lot about what is to come. The audience immediately understands that the man is behind the murder attempt, and that he is not only powerful, but also subtle, as he managed to get close to Rebecca, to have the scorpion attack her in her own bed.



The use of the scorpion also reflects on the character. Rebecca says that this weapon of choice is “very poetic, almost dramatic”. Failing to identify who is behind the attack, the characters only have the scorpion as evidence. Even though Cavois appears in the very start of the episode, there are no other indications as to who he is. The audience is only aware of what he looks like, but just like the characters, they have no idea about his identity and his reasons to want Rebecca dead.

But let's go back to the piece of evidence itself: the scorpion.

This nocturnal arthropod, usually found in the South latitudes, likes to hide in the walls, under stones. The fact that Rebecca's assailant would choose this as a weapon, in which he identifies himself in, then the scorpion gives an indication about Cavois' character. He is from Africa ("he is French, North African") and is referred to as a shadow by Rebecca. He is also referred to as "a dangerous man. A man with a reputation to protect". Like the scorpion provoking fear in people when they see one, Cavois' presence terrifies people, like Flitcraft who is sweating in front of him, or Phileas when he realizes how good (and dangerous) Cavois is.

- *Cavois' methods*

As stated earlier, Cavois is a dangerous man whose weapon of choice is the scorpion. Yet a distinction has to be made whether the victim is a man or a woman. Even if the first scene suggests that he is also after Fogg, Cavois seems to be mainly after Rebecca. First, he uses the scorpion which is, according to Rebecca "poetic". Cavois has managed to get close to her, but his methods soon escalate when he realises that she is still alive. To Flitcraft he says: "I should have cut her throat", again suggesting that he

is able to get close to her. But the subtle method has been replaced by a crude one. In the end, Cavois chooses to shoot her from a distance, this time showing no originality at all. It almost seems that he grew impatient and wanted to achieve his goal at any cost.

Cavois also reveals how interested he is in Phileas Fogg when he says: "It will be his madness against mine". While Rebecca is only an obstacle, Cavois considers Phileas Fogg as an equal.



But by killing Rebecca, Cavois knows that he is going to hurt Phileas. This is another trait of Cavois' nature: playing with his victims before killing them. After his first attempt to murder Rebecca, Cavois kills Taddeum who is under Fogg's protection. This murder has two objectives. Firstly, to get rid of the man able to decipher the code needed by Fogg, and secondly, to hit Fogg who promised to the old man that no harm would be done to him while under his

protection. In this case, Cavois achieves both objectives. But if Fogg is at first devastated by Taddeum's death, he resolves to fight back, therefore running after Cavois after Rebecca was shot.



The encounter between Fogg and Cavois in the cave eventually reveals how Cavois sees Fogg as a form of entertainment. This scene is actually the apex of the episode as it reveals Cavois' superiority on Fogg, who finally ends up at the man's mercy.

- *The cave*

After the shooting, Phileas follows Cavois into a dark cave containing two rows of antique statues in the centre. Most of the statues are of women, but at the end of the room, two taller male statues are supporting the world. These two men clearly represent Fogg and Cavois, each supporting their own world. The two statues are identical, or so they seem, and one cannot help but think

about Cavois' words to Phileas: "We are much the same." Yet Cavois has to kill Phileas. And while the hero is struggling in the cave, that appears to be a labyrinth for him, every statue becoming a potential danger, Cavois is enjoying the view from a higher position which illustrates the man's sense of superiority towards Fogg who doesn't fit in the cave even though it is well organised. Two parallel rows hardly turn themselves into a labyrinth unless of course the hero cannot accept another organisation than its own.

Cavois tortures Fogg by reminding him how he failed to protect Taddeus, before falsely acting as if he were sorry that he had killed Rebecca: "Such beauty wasted, but she had to die." It seems that Cavois was well aware of the attraction between Phileas and his cousin, demonstrating that the man is observant. Phileas, lost in the statues, fights back and claims that Cavois "live[s] in his own personal underworld." The cave being a representation of this underworld, Phileas fails to realise that his enemy is physically standing above him and is anxious to find him amongst the statues. Cavois is not just a nocturnal creature, but he is also a "shadow's shadow", as he explains to Fogg. He can be everywhere,

any time and proves it to Phileas by appearing suddenly behind him and disappearing just as suddenly.

The scene in the cave reveals more about Cavois character. He doesn't tolerate insults and is a Victorian Romantic killer. Killing is an Art to him, almost like a play where he and his victim would both be playing the main characters.

Phileas Fogg: "What are you waiting for?"

Cavois: "When I kill you, Phileas Fogg, I want to see your eyes. I want to be looking into your eyes just before you slide into oblivion."

This not only reveals that Cavois believes in the art of killing, but also that he does care for Phileas enough to be watching him die from a close distance. Cavois shows respect to his adversary, while Phileas Fogg acts foolish, insulting him and shooting randomly as if he wanted to prove that he has nothing in common with this shadowy man.



The Cardinal's Design introduces the character of Cavois, a fascinating villain whose apparitions in the episode may be short but are powerful. He is provoking fear. Even mentioning his name provokes unease. The whole episode builds the relationship between Cavois and Phileas Fogg, but also illustrates what was said about the man "He is a dangerous man, he has a reputation to protect". He is Fogg's personal Moriarty: clever, cruel and unapproachable. *The Cardinal's Revenge*, on the other hand, shows the exact opposite: the hero has to be victorious over the villain, and Fogg has to defeat Cavois, not only the man but also his reputation.

*By Suzanne Vanweddingen
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