

“The Black Lizard” is a detective novel written by Edogawa Rampo in 1934. The plot of the novel revolves around a battle between the criminal Mme Midorikawa and the ace detective Akechi Kogoro. The story contains themes relating to sexual transgression and unrequited love.

The novel is set in several location from Tokyo to Osaka. The novel begins when a delinquent enlists the help of crime boss Madame Midorikawa, also known as the “Black Lizard”, to help him dispose of the corpse of a person who he has recently killed. Thus, the delinquent owes her a favor and agrees to help her kidnap a jeweler’s daughter. The Black lizard is known to enjoy committing difficult crimes and to challenge herself she warns her victims beforehand, sending the jeweler a letter notifying him that she will kidnap his daughter. Midorikawa pretends to be the jeweler’s friend so that she can easily kidnap his daughter. Unfortunately, the jewler has already hired detective Akechi Kogoro to monitor his daughter, and he intervenes, saving her life. The black lizard is very frustrated and cannot believe that she had failed on her first attempt to kidnap the girl. Thus, she kidnaps the jeweler’s daughter again and demands a valuable diamond in exchange. Over the course of the story Midorikawa falls in love with her enemy, Akechi, and in the end she commits suicide by ingesting poison and dies in his arms.

Midorikawa is an outstanding criminal and as the story progresses her crimes becoming bolder and more fetishized. She enjoys dangerous situations and confronting her victims openly and then fleeing in disguise. Midorikawa is

materialistic and shows a lack of morals. She derives enjoyment from outsmarting people and then explaining her plans to them.

I did not feel that this novel contains traits typical of a work in the detective genre, instead displaying story elements more conventionally seen in the adventure novels. Contrary to typical detective novels such as the tales of Sherlock Holmes and Arsène Lupin, *The Black Lizard* does not contain any element of mystery, instead focusing on the competition that unfolds between Ms Midorikawa and Akechi. This element gives the novel a distinct atmosphere, not seen in other works in this genre.

One aspect that I found to be particularly interesting was the love that develops between the Black Lizard and Akechi Kogoro towards the end of the story. Midorikawa admires Akechi for his intelligence and believes that she has finally met her match, with this respect evolving into romantic feelings. I found the unrequited love displayed by the villain towards the hero to be unique. Although I found this story element to be surprising, I was slightly disappointed that Akechi did not return the Black Lizard's feelings.