Old Maid

(Re - Analysis)

Plasma



In order for us to analyse kiyotaka's depth of emotional perception against Nagumo, we first have to understand Nagumo's intentions and tactic complexity. Hence, i have divided each process via sections.

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Nagumo’s Intentions (Section 1)

The concept of playing Old Maid was constructed by Nagumo in order to find out more about kiyotaka's mental abilities. Nagumo notices how Manabu praises kiyotaka and admires him, something which is abnormal considering Manabu's talent compared to the rest of the school. And if by any chance, Manabu and Kiyotaka team up, it'll end up being bad for Nagumo. Hence, why he constructed the tactic of "Old Maid". But, Nagumo keeps this hidden, he cannot let Kiyotaka know that this was a trap/tactic set up by Nagumo in order to test him. So he gathers all of his peers and creates his deception, and beneath this deception, Nagumo would be observing every single move taken by Kiyotaka.

Nagumo even goes to detach himself from his peers in order to misdirect Kiyotaka. His focus was never on his peers (3rd year students) but rather just the 1st years, except for Kiyotaka. Upon entering the room too, he didn't make eye - contact with Kiyotaka.

Nagumo Miyabi, in this game of old maid, set up many traps that would catch the "Perceiver" and come into a deduction. Here, the

chances of the "Perceiver" trying to perceive his traps was on towards Kiyotaka the most. He was most likely to perceive Nagumo's trap, this would give Nagumo plentiful of information about Kiyotaka's Mental capacity and ability and he would be able to counter and control the future of ANHS.

Once his traps get touched upon or noticed by the Perceiver, Nagumo would come into a conclusion with solid logical reasoning.

We can say that, Nagumo's main intention was to drag Kiyotaka into his trap and notice his playstyle. It's like a mouse trap filled with cheese, the cat (Nagumo) would be hidden, waiting for the mouse to step in.

Nagumo's Traps (Section 2)

One by one, i'll be explaining each trap made by Nagumo during old maid in this section.

Truth and Lie Trap :

In this trap, Nagumo delivers info in two types of contradictory layers of deception. The truth, and the lie. Nagumo sets up the game in a way that makes it seem impossible for him to cheat, even though he was cheating. This trap lets him hide his intentions and also deduce kiyotaka's mental abilities easier.

The truth : Uses a sealed deck that everyone inspects and shuffles, reinforcing fairness. Pretends to persuade third years to play, distancing them from himself. Avoids observing Kiyotaka, making it seem like he has no interest in him. Loses on purpose during a 50/50 round against Tsunoda, making it seem like he lacks control over the game. Uses third-year players like Ishikura and Tsunoda to normalize his actions and reinforce the illusion of fairness.

2. The Lie (The Clue-Laying Layer)

While maintaining the cover-up, Nagumo intentionally plants subtle hints that he is cheating. His goal is to see if Kiyotaka will detect the deception and understand the depth of the scheme:

He "guesses" the outcomes correctly in ambiguous terms, making it seem like luck or skill. Uses third years to support his statements, like Ishikura feigning surprise at Nagumo’s failure. Marks the Joker subtly during the shuffle, ensuring only someone highly observant can detect it. Tests Kiyotaka directly in their one-on-one round, warning him to "give it some thought" when choosing a card.

By designing the game this way, Nagumo forces a smart observer (Koji) to go through a specific logical process:

Realize that Nagumo’s predictions are too accurate. Infer that he must have a method to track the Joker. Discover that Nagumo marked the Joker during the shuffle. Prove that Nagumo’s act was a test rather than just cheating for fun.

The trap isn’t just about catching Kiyotaka it’s about measuring how deeply Kiyotaka can analyze a layered deception. If Koji had openly exposed his knowledge of the marked Joker, Nagumo would have immediately recognized him as a major threat.

This strategy of Truth and Lie is a controlled deception, where the "truth" buries suspicions, and the "lie" provides hidden clues that only a genius could uncover.

1. Nagumo acts as if he is convincing the third-year students (like Ishikura and Tsunoda) to join the game. He makes it seem like they are reluctant participants. This gives the impression that they are independent players with no secret ties to him. By creating fake resistance, Nagumo eliminates the possibility of anyone assuming that the third years are working with him. If anyone (like Kiyotaka) suspects cheating, they won’t immediately link the third years to his scheme, making it harder to uncover the truth. This also allows him

to use the third years later without suspicion, since they were supposedly “forced” into the game.

2. Nagumo deliberately avoids looking at Kiyotaka or acknowledging his presence. This creates the illusion that he doesn’t see Kiyotaka as a threat or isn’t testing him. The act continues until it’s time for their one-on-one match, when he finally engages with Kiyotaka. If Nagumo had been observing Kiyotaka early on, it would have alerted him to the fact that he was being analyzed. Kiyotaka might have played more cautiously or even manipulated the game in return. This lowers Kiyotaka’s guard, making him less likely to suspect that the game is actually a test directed at him. By the time Kiyotaka realizes the scheme, Nagumo has already gathered valuable information on his thought process.

3. (Feigning Lack of Control) In a round where Nagumo had a 50% chance to win, he deliberately loses. Normally, if he were suspected of cheating, he should be able to win easily in a two-card selection. Instead, by losing when the odds are most in his favor, he makes it seem like he doesn’t have the ability to cheat. This discredits any potential accusations of him knowing the Joker’s position. If someone

was already suspicious, they now see a contradiction: “If Nagumo was cheating, why did he fail in the simplest round where he had a 50/50 chance?” This makes it harder for someone like Kiyotaka to logically conclude that Nagumo is manipulating the game. It also gives Nagumo a safety net if someone accuses him of cheating, he can just point to this round and say, “If I could cheat, why would I lose such an easy round?”

4. The third-year students act in ways that help Nagumo control the game’s perception: Ishikura’s Fake Surprise: When Nagumo fails to guess correctly, Ishikura acts surprised, reinforcing the idea that Nagumo was supposed to win but couldn’t. Tsunoda’s Role: By playing normally and “randomly” losing or winning against Nagumo, he ensures that Nagumo’s manipulation remains hidden. These third years function as buffers, helping Nagumo mask his real influence over the game. This Makes Nagumo’s actions appear normal by blending them into the natural flow of the game. If Nagumo was acting alone, any strange behavior would be more noticeable. Since multiple people are involved, it makes it harder for someone like Kiyotaka to isolate Nagumo’s specific tricks. When Nagumo misses a prediction or loses, these third years react in a way that reinforces

the illusion of fairness. This ensures that even if someone like Kiyotaka figures out the mechanics of the cheating, they struggle to prove it.

5. Nagumo consistently predicts the winners and losers of each round. However, he does so using vague language, never outright claiming certainty. His predictions appear to be based on probability and intuition, rather than insider knowledge. This Hides his actual knowledge: By phrasing his guesses ambiguously, Nagumo makes it seem like he is just reading the game well rather than outright knowing the Joker's position. If he were too direct in his predictions, it would raise suspicion immediately. Creates a psychological trap for Kiyotaka: A perceptive observer (Kiyotaka) would notice the pattern: "Why does Nagumo always seem to know what's going to happen?" However, because of the vague wording, there's no concrete proof that he is cheating. This forces Kiyotaka to actively investigate further, playing into Nagumo's hands. Ensures possible denial: If someone accuses Nagumo of cheating, he can simply respond: "I

never claimed certainty. I was just making educated guesses based on probability." This allows him to maintain his deception without being called out.

6. When Nagumo fails to guess correctly, Ishikura acts surprised, as if Nagumo's ability to predict the game was expected. This makes it seem like Nagumo normally guesses correctly, reinforcing the illusion of fairness. Other third-year players react naturally, making Nagumo's predictions seem like just a skillful read of the game. How it Normalizes Nagumo's actions: If Nagumo were acting alone, his behavior might stand out. By having others react naturally, it makes his actions seem completely normal within the game. Creates a fake persona of "Nagumo's skill": Ishikura's fake surprise reinforces the false perception that Nagumo is just naturally good at predicting games. This makes it harder for an observer to question his skill. Misdirects Kiyotaka's deductions: If Kiyotaka notices something strange, he must not only analyze Nagumo but also consider whether the third years are part of the deception. This adds an extra layer of complexity, making the truth harder to pinpoint.

7. During the shuffle, Nagumo subtly marks the Joker in a way that is almost undetectable. The marking is not obvious, meaning only someone with a high level of observation can catch it. This allows him to track the Joker at all times, giving him full control over the game. This Creates a hidden test for Kiyotaka: The marking is so subtle that an average person would never notice it. If Kiyotaka figures it out, it confirms that he has crazy observation skills. Adds another layer of deception: Even if someone suspects Nagumo of cheating, they must still figure out how he is doing it. Since the mark is hidden, most people won't be able to find concrete proof. Forces Kiyotaka to engage in deeper reasoning: Once Kiyotaka realizes Nagumo is cheating, he must then identify the method. This forces him to go through multiple layers of deduction, revealing more about his thinking process.

8. In their final confrontation, Nagumo gives Kiyotaka a choice: Pick one of two cards (one of them being the Joker). Before Kiyotaka makes his choice, Nagumo warns him twice to "give it some thought." This is a direct challenge, subtly pressuring Kiyotaka to reveal what he knows. This Forces Kiyotaka to reveal his reasoning ability: If Kiyotaka figures out the marked Joker, then Nagumo can confirm that

he is far more intelligent than he appears. A psychological pressure test: By warning him to “think carefully”, Nagumo is probing how Kiyotaka reacts under pressure. If Kiyotaka hesitates or changes his decision, it might indicate that he has figured out the trick but isn’t sure how to act. A final chance for Kiyotaka to slip up: If Kiyotaka were to directly call out the marked Joker, Nagumo would know that he went through all the logical steps to uncover the scheme. This would allow Nagumo to gauge Kiyotaka’s full capabilities.

Disadvantages (Section 3)

All these traps lead to many disadvantages for Kiyotaka that make it harder for him to perceive Nagumo’s emotional intentions.

In this situation, despite Ayanokoji’s intelligence and observational skills, he faces several disadvantages that make it difficult for him to operate freely. Here are 10 disadvantages he encounters during Nagumo’s Old Maid trap:

1. Nagumo Controls the Game's Structure Since Nagumo orchestrated the game, he has full control over the environment, rules, and players involved. This means Koji is playing within a pre-planned system where every action has already been accounted for by Nagumo.

2. The Presence of Third-Year Players Nagumo has third-year allies (like Ishikura and Tsunoda) to reinforce his illusion of fairness and mask his deception. Koji cannot directly accuse them or dismiss their actions since they blend in naturally with the game.

3. The Complexity of the Scheme Nagumo's deception is layered with both truth and lies, making it difficult for Kiyotaka to uncover the full extent of the trap in real-time. Even if Kiyotaka suspects cheating, proving it and understanding the true purpose behind it takes additional effort.

4. The Risk of Exposure: If Kiyotaka figures everything out too quickly or reacts too sharply, he risks exposing his own intelligence to Nagumo. On the other hand, if he acts too passive, Nagumo might conclude that he is either unintelligent or hiding something, which could lead to further probing.

5. Limited Time to Analyze Unlike a typical strategic battle where Ayanokoji can take time to plan countermeasures, this scenario happens in the moment. He must process multiple layers of deception instantly while still playing along naturally.

6. No External Influence or Assistance Since this is a closed environment, Koji has no outside help and must handle the situation alone. He cannot gather information from external sources, making it harder to verify suspicions.

7. The Psychological Pressure Nagumo intentionally places pressure on Koji, particularly in their one-on-one match, by warning him to "think carefully." This is a subtle mental trap, forcing Koji to make a critical decision that could reveal his intelligence.

8. Forced to Play a Role Kiyotaka is in a difficult position because he must maintain his persona as an average student while also avoiding being manipulated by Nagumo. He cannot act too smart or too ignorant, meaning he has to perfectly balance his responses throughout the game.

9. The Ambiguous Nature of Nagumo's Moves Because Nagumo frames his predictions vaguely and creates an illusion of luck and skill, Koji not directly accuse him of cheating without evidence. This forces Kiyotaka to rely on subtle deductions rather than clear-cut proof.

10. Uncertainty About Nagumo's True Intentions While it is clear that Nagumo is testing him, Koji does not immediately know how deep this test goes or what Nagumo will do with the information. This means he has to be cautious about every action, as any misstep could give Nagumo insight into his true capabilities.

Kiyotaka's EP (Section 4)

Even when being in a trapped situation, Kiyotaka does not lose his composure. Kiyotaka had many disadvantages during this scene, yet still he :

- Emotionally perceives Nagumo's mental capacity.
- Detected Nagumo's manipulation of the game.
- Physically identified the marked joker.
- Feeling disgust at the rigged system.
- Understood Nagumo's psychological tactics.
- Outsmarted Nagumo while hiding his own intelligence.

This is the text from Year 1 Volume 8 which we will be using to analyse his depth of EP.

Text : "Playing silently isn't fun at all. Let's chat," proposed Nagumo.
He received the deck back from Keisei and dealt the cards.
"I'll deal the first round. From the second round onward, the loser has to shuffle and deal."
The players nodded in agreement. Nagumo hadn't looked at me once since entering the room. Even though we'd already met during winter vacation, I apparently didn't exist to him.
"Oh, first-years who aren't playing...just relax. Pretend we're not here. Being nervous around your seniors all the time will affect your performance this week."

Nagumo could say that, but we couldn't be as relaxed as we had been a little while ago. Except Kouenji, who ignored them completely and went to sleep.

I decided to quietly observe the game to the end.

"Even though it's just a game, we can't lose to the first-years, senpai."

"Unfortunately, I don't have the best luck. If you expect too much of me, you'll be disappointed."

"It'll be fine. I think my senpai are all pretty strong. You won't lose the first or second game."

Despite this being a game where chance dictated much of the outcome, Nagumo brimmed with confidence. They were already approaching the game's halfway point.

"Done."

Ishikura successfully got rid of all of his cards. Vice PresidentKiriyama was next, and Nagumo was third. The second-years clinched victory quickly, adding pressure to the first-years.

"Done."

Hashimoto put down two cards with matching numbers, bowing to the third-years as he did so. The remaining players were Keisei and Tsunoda, a third-year. For such a tense game, the players seemed rather calm. Keisei had two cards left and Tsunoda one. That meant

Keisei was holding the joker. If the third-year picked the joker, Keisei would be the winner. But after some deliberation, Tsunoda picked the winning card.

“That settles it.”

“I lost.”

The first round ended with Keisei’s defeat. The first-years had to make breakfast at least once.

“Let’s keep calm. Losing once or twice isn’t a big deal,” said Hashimoto. Keisei nodded but seemed apologetic. He was probably worried he’d lose another round.

“Hey, I already told you, didn’t I? The loser collects the cards and deals them,” Nagumo said.

“S-sorry,” said Keisei, collecting the cards in a panic.

The second round soon began. From where I was seated, I could see one of the third-years’ cards. He had the joker. He held it until about halfway through the round but eventually passed to another student. The final two players were Kiriyama and Keisei. Keisei couldn’t help but look incredibly nervous at being in the one-on-one showdown for the second time in a row. On top of that, judging from the number of cards remaining, I knew that Keisei was holding the joker.

Kiriyama slowly, hesitantly picked a card. Keisei struggled to keep his poker face, but he hung his head in defeat. Within the span of a few minutes, the first-year students had suffered two consecutive defeats. Yahiko, who had been watching the situation unfold, signaled to Keisei that it was time to switch.

“Probably for the best,” said Nagumo. Hearing that, Keisei obediently tagged out and let Yahiko in.The number of cards in his hand was decreasing, but all that mattered was who held the joker.

“All right.”

After another second-year student took third place, Hashimoto also got rid of his cards.

“Oh, ho, looks like the firs-years survived this time. Congrats.”

“Thank you very much, Nagumo-senpai.”

The final players were Nagumo and Tsunoda. However, Nagumo had the advantage, with a 50 percent chance of victory.

“Here goes,” said Nagumo, claiming the card on the right. However, he’d grabbed the joker. “Too bad.”

Nagumo held out the two cards in his hand. Tsunoda picked the card on the right, just as Nagumo had done.

“That settles it.”

In the end, Nagumo had the joker, and the second-years suffered a defeat.
“Looks like I got beat. All right, should we start the fourth round?” Nagumo began dealing the cards, not looking frustrated in the least.
“You first-years finally won a round, so how about you lose again this time? I mean, we are your seniors. I’d like you to take over our duties.”
“If I remember right, Sudou is from Class D. Who here are Class D students?” asked Ishikura, looking around.
“Ah, we’re Sudou’s classmates,” said Keisei, looking at me. “Oh, and we were just promoted to Class C,” he added.
I didn’t expect them to care much about what was going on in the other grade levels, but when Keisei said that, Ishikura looked impressed.
“Promoted from D to C, huh? That’s amazing.”
“Seems like the former Class D ran out of class points right after they started at this school, though.”
“Yet they still managed to get promoted. What’s the gap between you and Class B like?”As someone asked that question, though, Ishikura stopped Keisei before he could answer. “Forget it. This group comprises all classes; I shouldn’t be adding fuel to a fire,” he said.

It certainly wasn't the best topic—and wouldn't be a fun conversation for Ishizaki, the rest of Class D, or Class B. In the end, the first-years barely spoke, while Nagumo and the third-years kept the conversation going.

It was the fourth round. After four out of the six players finished up, Nagumo called for the round to end.

"Both the remaining players are first-years. There's no need to finish, right?" he said.

No matter who won, it was still our loss. Yahiko and Hashimoto put their remaining cards back in the deck. We managed to win against the second-years just once and lost three times.

We'd only had to cook breakfast twice, but now thanks to this round of Old Maid, the number had risen. The more we lost, the worse our burden became.

"Maybe I should switch out," said Hashimoto. No one seemed willing to replace him, though, with the feeling of defeat hanging heavy in the air.

"It doesn't matter who steps in. Anyone is fine. You," said Nagumo. He beckoned me over. I wanted to decline, of course, but obviously couldn't. Regardless of whether he'd called on me intentionally or randomly, I had to accept.

“Sorry, Ayanokouji. It’s up to you.”
“Okay.”
Well, three first-years had already played. It wasn’t so strange that I’d been picked too. Besides, this was just for fun. Win or lose, it was just a normal game.
As we switched places, Yahiko asked me to deal the cards. I shuffled the deck and started to deal awkwardly.
“All right, this is the fifth game. I think it’s about time the third-years go down. Come on, first-year,” said Nagumo, trying to light a fire under our asses.

“In the end, card games come down to luck. When you lose, you lose.”
Nagumo shuffled the two cards in his hand, and offered them to me.
“All right, take your pick.”
From an outsider’s perspective, I had a fifty-fifty chance, but that wasn’t really the case here. Even though he’d taken the cards from a sealed box, Nagumo had been the first to deal. That was probably when he’d marked the joker. Though almost invisible, there was a minute notch on the card.
I’d arrived at this conclusion by looking at the spread of wins. In the five games so far, Nagumo had predicted the outcomes would be

ahead of time, even though, with inexperienced first-years in play, there should have been no way of knowing how a game would go. But Nagumo was evasive, only saying which team had a high probability of winning and which did not.

The senior students who'd realized the trick...no, who'd been told about it...had an overwhelming advantage. Disgusting. From where I was sitting, the card on the right was marked, meaning it was the joker. There was no mistaking it.

If I picked the other card, though, would what happen? The answer was simple. Nothing. I'd have just won by a fifty-fifty chance.

"I can't tell which is which no matter how hard I try, so I'm just going to pick randomly. Here goes," I said, reaching out. But Nagumo pulled his cards back.

"Give it some thought before you pick."

"I don't know that thinking it over will do anything."

"Still, try," he insisted.

"I understand. I'll give it some thought," I said, looking at the cards. Of course, I wasn't really thinking. After about two seconds, I grabbed for a card.

"I like the one on the right. I'll take that one," I said.

As fine a reason as any. Nagumo didn't stop me that time, and I drew the winning card.
"Sorry," I said, showing that I'd won.
"You lost. Huh, Nagumo?"

Analysis -

Kiyotaka quickly realizes that Nagumo's predictions about the game's outcomes are too accurate for a game based on luck. This is evident when he notes:

Text: "In the five games so far, Nagumo had predicted the outcomes ahead of time, even though, with inexperienced first-years in play, there should have been no way of knowing how a game would go."
Analysis: This proves that Kiyotaka deduced Nagumo's control over the game. If chance dictated the game, then Nagumo should not have been able to make consistent predictions.

Additionally, Kiyotaka understands that Nagumo's advantage isn't just based on personal skill but rather on a pre-established trick. He confirms this when he says:

Text: “The senior students who’d realized the trick… no, who’d been told about it… had an overwhelming advantage.” Analysis: This proves that Kiyotaka perceives how Nagumo’s allies were informed about the trick in advance, making the game unfair. This also implies that Nagumo deliberately created a system where first-years were at a disadvantage.

Kiyotaka’s observational skills allow him to detect that Nagumo marked the joker while dealing. He confirms this when he states:

Text: “Even though he’d taken the cards from a sealed box, Nagumo had been the first to deal. That was probably when he’d marked the joker.”
Analysis: This proves that Kiyotaka understands when the marking took place during the initial deal meaning Nagumo had planned the deception from the start.

His suspicions are confirmed when he physically inspects the cards:

Text: “Though almost invisible, there was a minute notch on the card.”

Analysis: This is direct proof that Kiyotaka not only theorized about the trick but also physically confirmed it. His ability to notice such a small detail highlights his superior perception.

Kiyotaka does not usually express strong emotions, but here, he reveals his disdain for Nagumo’s methods:

Text: “Disgusting.”

Analysis: This proves that Kiyotaka finds Nagumo’s tactics unfair. Despite his usual detached demeanor, he internally reacts negatively to the senior students' trickery. This moment shows that Kiyotaka has personal standards regarding competition.

Nagumo tries to test Kiyotaka by telling him to think carefully before choosing a card:

Text: “Give it some thought before you pick.”

Analysis: This proves that Nagumo is observing Kiyotaka’s reaction to see if he falls into hesitation or overconfidence. If Kiyotaka picks too quickly, he may seem too confident. If he hesitates too much, he may seem nervous. Nagumo is deliberately trying to gauge his intelligence.

Kiyotaka recognizes this attempt and neutralizes it by pretending to think:

Text: “I understand. I’ll give it some thought.”

Analysis: This proves that Kiyotaka understands the psychological pressure Nagumo is applying. Instead of showing any real emotion, he acts as though he is unsure, preventing Nagumo from reading his true thoughts.

Instead of exposing Nagumo's trick outright, Kiyotaka pretends to choose randomly while secretly selecting the correct card:

Text: "I like the one on the right. I'll take that one."

Analysis: This proves that Kiyotaka deliberately hides his intelligence by making his choice seem like chance. If he had picked too decisively, Nagumo might have suspected that he saw through the trick.

After winning, he subtly challenges Nagumo without making it obvious:

Text: "You lost. Huh, Nagumo?"

Analysis: This proves that Kiyotaka is deliberately provoking Nagumo, but in a way that does not reveal his own awareness of the trick. This forces Nagumo to question whether Kiyotaka is truly lucky or if he actually saw through the deception.

Kiyotaka also emotionally perceives Nagumo's interest and intentions against Koenji.

The text : "Fine. Let's decide by playing cards."
"We're okay with this?" Keisei asked the other first-year, sounding slightly apprehensive. Ishizaki, Hashimoto, and the others nodded, as did I.
The others eventually nodded too—except Kouenji.
"Kouenji, you object to this?"
Nagumo should've just ignored him. Their little exchange in the gymnasium this afternoon probably made him want to poke the bear.
"I neither approve nor object. The majority has already spoken."
"I don't care about the majority. I want to know what you think."
"Then allow me to answer, student council president. I haven't the slightest interest in this exchange. I don't care enough to either approve or object. Does that satisfy you?"
Kouenji's comments seemed designed to cause more problems.
However, Nagumo let loose an unexpectedly amiable laugh.

“Why don’t you join the student council, Kouenji? I’d love to have someone as interesting as you aboard. I’ve heard you’re fairly accomplished in both academics and athletics too.”
Everyone in the room, including the third-years, was shocked. Kouenji was the only one who didn’t react.
“Well, that’s quite unfortunate. I have no interest in the student council.”
“I suppose you wouldn’t. Well, you’re welcome any time. If you do happen to develop an interest, call me. Now then, how about we get this card game started?” Nagumo looked away from Kouenji.
“What game exactly are we playing?”
“How about something simple. Old Maid? The person holding the joker in the end loses. Two players from each grade will participate in six games total.”
I wasn’t very familiar with cards, but even I knew about Old Maid.

Nagumo actively seeks out Kōenji’s opinion, despite the majority already agreeing to play cards.

Text: “I don’t care about the majority. I want to know what you think.” Analysis: This proves that Nagumo sees Kōenji as someone different from the others. Instead of simply ignoring him (which would be logical given Kōenji’s usual dismissive attitude), Nagumo deliberately engages with him.

Kiyotaka internally notes:

Text: “Nagumo should’ve just ignored him. Their little exchange in the gymnasium this afternoon probably made him want to poke the bear.” Analysis: This proves that Kiyotaka understands Nagumo’s thinking. He perceives that Nagumo isn’t questioning Kōenji for logical reasons but because of their prior interaction. It suggests that Nagumo is curious about Kōenji or sees him as a challenge. 2. Nagumo’s Invitation to the Student Council

Nagumo unexpectedly invites Kōenji to the student council, despite knowing Kōenji’s personality.

Text: “Why don’t you join the student council, Kōenji? I’d love to have someone as interesting as you aboard.” Analysis: This proves that

Nagumo acknowledges Kōenji's uniqueness and finds him intriguing. Nagumo typically values control, but Kōenji is completely unpredictable. Instead of dismissing him, Nagumo tries to recruit him, showing that he recognizes Kōenji's potential as a wildcard.

Nagumo also acknowledges Kōenji's talent:

Text: "I've heard you're fairly accomplished in both academics and athletics too." Analysis: This proves that Nagumo has gathered information on Kōenji and sees him as someone valuable. Unlike the other first-years, Kōenji is a true individualist, making him stand out from the usual students Nagumo manipulates.

The reaction of the third-years is also telling:

Text: "Everyone in the room, including the third-years, was shocked." Analysis: This proves that Nagumo's proposal is unusual. It suggests that even among seniors, it is rare for Nagumo to actively invite someone into his circle.

Kōenji's dismissal of the offer is immediate:

Text: “Well, that’s quite unfortunate. I have no interest in the student council.” Analysis: This proves that Kōenji sees no value in Nagumo’s power structure. Unlike others who may see the student council as prestigious, Kōenji is completely indifferent.

Nagumo’s reaction to the rejection is also important:

Text: “I suppose you wouldn’t. Well, you’re welcome any time.” Analysis: This proves that Nagumo expected the rejection and isn’t offended. Instead, he keeps the offer open, indicating that he still sees Kōenji as someone worth recruiting. 3. Kiyotaka’s Emotional Perception of Nagumo’s Thoughts

Throughout this exchange, Kiyotaka remains observant but does not react emotionally. However, his internal commentary shows that he perceives Nagumo’s thought process:

Nagumo is engaging with Kōenji due to their prior encounter.

Kiyotaka understands that Nagumo is not ignoring Kōenji because he sees him as an unusual element that cannot be easily controlled.

Nagumo's invitation is a strategic move.

Kiyotaka perceives that Nagumo is not just being friendly—he is testing Kōenji and possibly trying to bring him under his influence.

Nagumo's reaction to rejection is calculated.

Instead of showing disappointment, Nagumo keeps the offer open, indicating that he still sees Kōenji as useful.

Kiyotaka does not explicitly react to Nagumo's thoughts on Kōenji, but his observational skills allow him to fully grasp Nagumo's intentions. He sees Nagumo's curiosity, acknowledgment of talent, and strategic recruitment for what they are.

Kiyotaka also observes his own group's reactions and perceives their emotions.

And that is it.

