

Chapter 17: Sage 9

The chapter "Sage 9" follows Sage as she prepares for a covert FBI mission to record a confession from Josef, a suspected Nazi war criminal. Sage reflects on her unexpected romance with Leo, an FBI agent who contrasts sharply with her ex, Adam. Leo's thoughtful gestures, like remembering her coffee preferences and ensuring her comfort, make her feel valued. Despite her lingering self-doubt about her scars, Sage notices her smile first in the mirror, signaling growing self-acceptance. The mission's delay—due to her sisters' shivah visits, legal approvals, and Josef's hospitalization—has given her time to rehearse the encounter with Leo's guidance.

Sage's sisters, Pepper and Saffron, are initially skeptical but quickly charmed by Leo, who deflects their critiques of Sage with humor and diplomacy. Their departure marks a rare moment of harmony, as Pepper even asks Sage to stay in touch. Leo's presence has eased tensions, and Sage marvels at his ability to shield her from familial criticism. Meanwhile, Leo coordinates the mission logistics, including securing a surveillance van and rehearsing potential scenarios with Sage. Their plan involves her wearing a wire to record Josef's confession while Leo monitors from nearby, ready to intervene if needed.

The chapter highlights Sage's anxiety about the mission, despite her thorough preparation. Leo reassures her, running drills where he role-plays Josef's possible reactions—ranging from cooperative to hostile. Sage worries about mentioning her grandmother, a Holocaust survivor, fearing it might alert Josef. Leo advises caution but encourages her to trust her instincts. Their banter reveals their deepening bond, as Leo lightens the mood with exaggerated descriptions of a dramatic rescue, blending humor with reassurance. Sage suspects Leo downplays his combat skills, hinting at his competence despite his self-deprecating jokes.

As they finalize preparations, Sage changes into a sundress to conceal the wire, a practical challenge in summer. Leo hands her the transmitter, emphasizing the stakes of the mission. The chapter captures Sage's emotional growth—balancing fear with determination—and her reliance on Leo's support. Their partnership, both professional and personal, underscores the chapter's themes of trust, justice, and healing. The impending confrontation with Josef looms, leaving Sage poised between vulnerability and resolve as she steps

