



The Secrets of Flowers

Sally Page

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In Sally Page's historical novel *The Secrets of Flowers*, a traumatized widow investigates early twentieth-century transatlantic shipping.

Emma struggles to find her place in the world after the death of her husband, Will. Leaving behind an academic career, she begins working as an assistant in a local garden center. She fills her days with flowers and new friends. After watching a documentary on the *Titanic*, Emma develops an interest in the person who might have been responsible for the floral demands of the great ship. Her obsession with finding the ship's florist instigates travels and encounters that broaden her world and the revelation of truths pertinent to her life.

Most of the activity is centered in Emma's home, left cool and dark after Will's death, and the garden center, a warmer and more colorful locale full of light and activity. The chapters alternate between Emma and Violet, who lived at the time of the *Titanic* and whose chapters appear in italics. Both voices are ornate; for Violet, it's period appropriate, while for Emma, it's more distracting. Considerable time is spent describing scenes, sometimes at the cost of maintaining the story's flow. Nevertheless, the women's stories are engaging.

Emma's investigation into the identity and nature of the florist of the *Titanic* is helped along by a secondary cast that includes the garden center owners, a former shipping line florist, a perfume specialist in Paris, and a historian of early shipping days. This group becomes her family, supporting her research and delighting in both her emotional recovery and the surprising discoveries she unearths.

The Secrets of Flowers is a quiet tale of redemption in which a woman escapes her pain by investigating life on the *Titanic*.

CAROLINE GOLDBERG IGRA (March / April 2025)

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