

No One Is Better Than You

Edith Renfrow Smith
and the Power of a
Mother's Words



by Monique McLay Shore
Illustrations by Erica Lauren Butler

No One is Better Than You:

Edith Renfrow Smith and the Power of a Mother's Words

by Monique McLay Shore
Illustrations by Erica Lauren Butler

A story to celebrate a remarkable
woman and inspire confidence in
young people everywhere

Edith Renfrow Smith was born in Grinnell, Iowa, in 1914 to one of the few Black families in the area. The fifth of six children raised by Lee and Eva Pearl Renfrow, her mother was the driving force in the lives of the children and helped each believe they could overcome adversity. Despite poverty and racial obstacles, all would attend college and have successful careers. In 1937, Edith became the first Black woman to graduate from Grinnell College. After college she moved to Chicago where she raised her family, taught, volunteered and continued to inspire everyone she met. In 2023, at the age of 109, her bright spirit and belief in the good in all people, along with her adage that “No one is better than you” continues to inspire everyone she meets.

Author Monique McLay Shore reveals Edith's resilience, her determination to succeed, and the inspiration she gives to other people. Beautiful historically accurate illustrations by Erica L. Butler bring Edith to life both as a child with her family and later in the community. Extensive back matter and historic photos fill in the Renfrow family story.



Author Monique Shore has known Mrs. Renfrow Smith since 2015. A librarian in Grinnell, Iowa, Monique is active in preserving and sharing local history. At age 109, Mrs. Renfrow Smith and her daughter have been involved throughout the development of the book.

The process of this book project was documented online and can be read at renfrowstory.com.



Scarlet Squirrel
Publishing

915 Summer St. Grinnell, IA 50112

renfrowstory.com

979-8-218-27050-6

60 page illustrated paperback

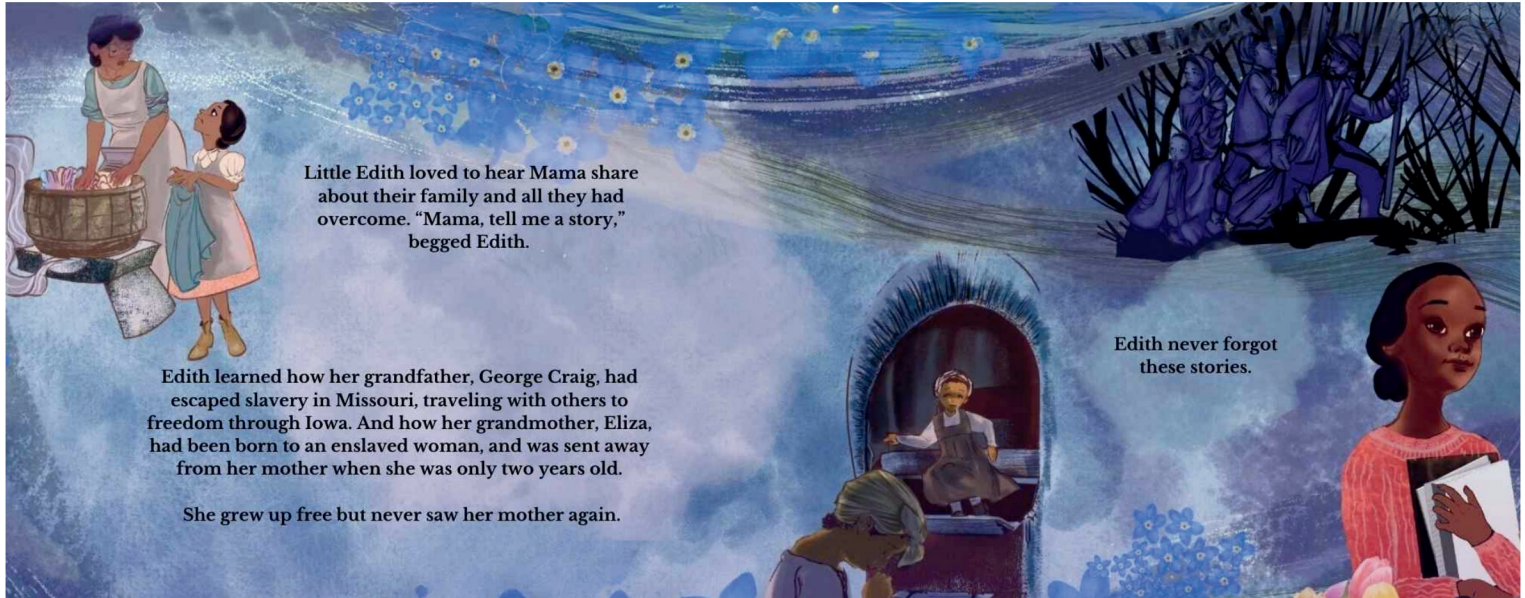
\$14.95

Order online at tinyurl.com/renfrowbook



Excerpts from the book

No One is Better Than You: Edith Renfow Smith and the Power of a Mother's Words



Little Edith loved to hear Mama share about their family and all they had overcome. "Mama, tell me a story," begged Edith.

Edith learned how her grandfather, George Craig, had escaped slavery in Missouri, traveling with others to freedom through Iowa. And how her grandmother, Eliza, had been born to an enslaved woman, and was sent away from her mother when she was only two years old.

She grew up free but never saw her mother again.

Edith never forgot these stories.

My family and friends have long wished for a story that honors my mother's character, legacy and life. Through the process, my family and I have marveled at the conversations, engagement and willingness of the author to reflect with us on the messages sent. I am thankful for their willingness to bring my mother's story to life for generations yet to come.

—Alice Frances Smith, daughter of Edith Renfow Smith

Mama always told them,

*"No one is better than you.
They may have more money.
They may be more beautiful.
But no one is any better
than YOU."*

During the four years Edith attended Grinnell she was the only Black student on campus. There had been Black men at Grinnell before, like the Rosenwald Scholars who had visited her house when she was little. But there were never very many. Two Black women had gone to Grinnell before her, but neither of them had graduated.

So when Edith received her diploma in June 1937, she made history as the first Black woman to graduate from Grinnell College. It was a very happy day for Edith and her family. Mama asked a photographer to take Edith's picture so they would always remember that special day.



Scarlet Squirrel
Publishing

915 Summer St. Grinnell, IA 50112

renfrowstory.com

979-8-218-27050-6

60 page illustrated paperback

\$14.95

Order online at tinyurl.com/renfrowbook

