Wondrous

I'm driving home from school when the radio talk
turns to E.B. White, his birthday, and I exit
the here and now of the freeway at rush hour,

travel back into the past, where my mother is reading
to my sister and me the part about Charlotte laying her eggs
and dying, and though this is the fifth time Charlotte

has died, my mother is crying again, and we're laughing
at her because we know nothing of loss and its sad math,
how every subtraction is exponential, how each grief

multiplies the one preceding it, how the author tried
seventeen times to record the words *She died alone*
without crying, seventeen takes and a short walk during

which he called himself ridiculous, a grown man crying
for a spider he'd spun out of the silk thread of invention —
wondrous how those words would come back and make

him cry, and, yes, wondrous to hear my mother's voice
ten years after the day she died — the catch, the rasp,
the gathering up before she could say to us, *I'm OK.*

Sarah Freligh

Sarah Freligh is the author of eight books, including *Sad Math*, winner of the 2014 Moon City Press Poetry Prize, *Hereafter*, winner of the 2024 Bath Novella-in-Flash Contest, and the recently released collection of short stories *Other Emergencies*. Her work has been anthologized in *New Micro: Exceptionally Short Fiction* (Norton 2018), and *Best Microfiction* (2019-22, '25). She is the recipient of a 2009 poetry fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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