In The Dark

Together we lay in the dark on her fresh scented sheets.. the ones her father washed for us today.

She cries and whimpers and turns to me in sorrow as she does not want to go to sleep. I cradle her closer still, feel her breath on my breasts, and the hot tears on her face melting in against my skin. She slides the no spill cup, filled with ice water, along my arm.

Cold, so cold.

I try not to react to it and hum softly the lullaby she imperiously demands that I not sing aloud as she is angry and frustrated at the dark, and at the pillow, and at the bed, and at the belief that she will somehow miss out on something if she sleeps.

Softly I begin speaking.

Talking of how she was conceived to grow within me. A tiny baby, inside my body, that swam and played and grew. She was as a growing spark of life that tickled me from the inside until she was big enough to have a body all her own. Her blood mingled with my blood. Her life mingled with my life.

The whimpers fall silent as she listens now, her fingers play with a strand of my hair, and her face remains mere inches from mine in the darkness. I ask her if it is nice to have her own body now and she nods and turns away from me, finally relaxing her rigid form, drinking her ice water.
She waves her hand in the dark in front of my face, motioning at me to continue speaking. So I talk about how when she was just born, her tiny body and I would snuggle just like this.

Our breath was hot and sticky on each other’s skin, our hearts would beat in syncopation. Together, infant and young mother, we would remember how close we were when she was yet within me. And that infant child, so beautiful and perfect, drank milk from my breast and grew...

"But you don’t have any more milk," she interrupts and I nod in the dark, though she cannot see me.

"No. I don’t have a baby any more. Moms only have milk when they have babies," and she nods too, though I cannot see it.

Her voice breaks free from the emotion she had lodged in her throat from before and she utters her words clearly in the warmth of the night under the ceiling fan that only turns too warm air, "I’m a big girl. Now I have an ice water juice cup."

And so I kiss the top of her head and nuzzle into her curls, gently exhaling. I talk to her about how I love her. I talk about how a part of her will always be my baby, even now, though she is growing, because once she was inside me and born to her own life.

A thought strikes me and the words tumble softly over the pillow and over her skin as we snuggle. I love her in so many ways, loving her as a baby is but one. I love the young woman she is becoming, the smiles
and giggles and laughs. I love the best friends that we already are and somehow will always be.. The
intangible loves as yet unfulfilled. I love her as a promise and a covenant I half remember making to
bring her into this world and keep her safe. And I love her as the idea she represents - the best within
me given to help her become her own person.

She is quiet and I fall silent. I can see her eyes open, shining like liquid black in the dark, and she nods to
me again to continue, "It's as if each type of love is a different ribbon, a different colored string that
takes on the special, individual hue of that love. And they come together, woven as a tapestry of light
and color. That is the love between us."

I tell her that I love her father in at least a dozen different ways. I can see the strands of individual,
different types of love between him and I. I can feel the connections reach over to where he has
already begun to lightly snore and feel them tugging at my heart.

She takes another sip from her ice water. And we are quiet again.

She says to me, quietly, "It tickles."

"It tickles? What? The love?"

She shakes her head, "No, no, it tinkles."

"Oh! Tinkles."
Yes.. the love there between us.. the strands we can see in the dark, or in the mind’s eye, or maybe we only really ever see it when we close our eyes. They dance with music.

I nod and squeeze her, "Maybe that is really it. The love between us.. between everyone we love.. is like a complex strand of light. A melody which makes it own music."

I am still and she remains hushed as I cherish the moment. I am overpowered by the way her, now long, legs are pressed warm against the top of my thighs. I think of the man who sleeps, back turned away from us on the other bed, and the magic that lies between us. How - as frail, disparate people - we created this beauty.

I am painfully aware of the tenuous colors of new love I feel for him as he is becoming confident in himself and in his own wry humor, that I dare to enjoy spending time with him, dare to look forward to his arrival, dare to try love anew so many years into our marriage.

I think long and deep of how some loves in my life are all so intimately layered. We are connected from the love that was, is, and will yet be.

The child lightly snores, just then, and I rest my chin on her head and listen to the sound of the quiet room, the ceiling fan overhead, a small drip of water from somewhere deeper in the house.

I kiss my sleeping daughter on her forehead, bring the comforter up against her, and slip it into place as
I draw away and slide off the side of her bed. She shifts, lying now on her back where I just was, making soft sounds and half heard words until she is again asleep.

Standing in the dark between the two beds, between the two bodies who mean the very world to me, I am overwhelmed.

I open the door, with its quiet creak and descend the steps to ponder over the dark of the night, over the facets of my life, to greet, wordlessly, the rest of the night and lean into the caress of a cooler midnight breeze as my bare feet step over the rough boards of the back deck.

I remain small, perhaps, under the canvas of night and the bright display of so many twinkling, nay, ‘tinkling’ stars, but not ever again alone. Those tinkling strains of love, this beautiful silent sound, fills all of my senses and cleanses my soul leaving only small, wet tracks down my cheeks.