Things my Mother Told Me

Baby, someday somebody’s going to tell you what you can be
and maybe it’s best if that someone is me.

You can’t be a lover without being a whore, or haughty or butch
and you can’t be beautiful without being sexy—you are more than a face, but face it:
someday your body won’t be beautiful enough for the eyes of men, eyes that will make you
disappear, feel too small to reach light switches or see over steering wheels

And you can’t be strong without blurring the crease between SHE and HE
or ingesting pills ground fine found only in urine, babe
to get to the top you’ve got to cheat, cuz the best of the best are the best at lying

It’s best you realize that you can’t have feelings without menstruating,
blame good blame bad on the blood in your bones,
God forbid you forget to wax your limbs or scorch your skin
or frimp your face, God forbid your breasts are less than 34C
because bigger’s always better unless we’re talking dress size

And if you want to get to college I suggest you leave engineering to the boys
leave med-school to the men leave lawyers and chemists, come frolic in words the unimportance
of which shall cause you to fall over feet, take jobs stocking shelves
don’t think you can work your way up to CEO and earn as much as the man to your left
or the man to your right or even the men beneath you

Don’t you know it’s best to wait for Mr.____ to come and save you—
a stethoscope noose winding your neck, neverminding the fact he’s less a human more a
machine, can’t look in your eyes just prescribes for you pills of varying sizes to cure that which
he cannot give—because, babe, he’s afraid
of women with spines and mouths that dare to speak
not in whispers but screams

And if you think that to love is to give and receive, it is not.
He may take first your word, second your body, but never,
I mean never give up your soul because that’s what will keep you sane.

And if you dare defy these expectations you might end up like me, but if there is one thing I
know it’s that being lonely doesn’t mean you’re alone

And I need you to know that I’ll love you
even if this monstrous world swallows you whole
and spits you out mangled and covered in slime
because no part of you is too ugly to love, and no part of you is not good enough.

Repeat after me, no part of you is too ugly to love, and no part of you is not good enough