If you are like me by Maria S. Rivera Maulucci

If you are like me, you arrived at Barnard wondering how you got in and whether you really belonged here. Meeting the other students didn’t help

If you are like me, you dove into First-year orientation with so much enthusiasm your new friends took you aside to ask if you were on drugs (For the record, I wasn’t)

If you are like me, you arrived not fully prepared for the rigors of college writing, but full of thoughts and ideas that you struggled to form in sanctioned ways upon a page.

If you are like me, you got a C on your first history paper (your best subject in high school). The pages were full of red marks and a note to buy a copy of Strunk and White. That ended thoughts of majoring in History, Political Science, Philosophy, (I could go on here.)

If you are like me, you satisfied your quantitative reasoning requirement with anything but a math course, and that eliminated majoring in Math, Economics, Chemistry, Physics (are you getting the picture here?)

If you are like me, you managed to get through Freshman Seminar and Freshman English with B’s but had such a fear of writing that you chose your major, Biology, because you would not have to write a senior thesis

If you are like me you were never only a college student, you had family responsibilities like taking your little brother to school or working too many hours a week to pay for things your parents could not afford

If you are like me, you found a campus job and a mentor (not necessarily a professor) who cared for you throughout your four years, whose advice proved valuable over and over again, and who you promised to stay in touch with long after you leave Barnard

If you are like me, your grades ranged from A to F and everything in between, but grades were never a measure of how much you learned inside or outside the classroom.

If you are like me, you literally stood out in a crowd, labeled by the things that made you different from most of the other students, so everyone seemed to know you even if you weren’t always sure who you were.

If you are like me you had more than a few tears and more than a few laughs along the way, you fell in and out of love and made new friends but kept some of the old.

If you are like me, you tried new things and expanded your horizons. You delved into a class, a job, an internship, a club, research on campus or off campus, some activity that shaped your hopes and dreams for the future.

If you are like me, you found ways to practice your faith and to keep the flames of hope alive within you even though it was something your classmates seldom spoke about
If you are like me somewhere along the way you realized that you had not or could not live up to your Barnard potential. There were too many opportunities you did not take advantage of. There were too many things holding you back. The four years were just too short, but you made yourself a promise that one day you would live up to that potential.

If you are like me, despite all your efforts, you might be approaching graduation a few credits shy, and even though only you and your advisor know, you still feel like a bit of a fraud at the idea of donning your cap and gown and walking across the stage.

But you are not like me. You are incomparable and extraordinary, gifted with your own blend of bold and beautiful, your own challenges, your own struggles, and your own triumphs.