

**“i carry the ‘m’ card  
(i didn’t deal the deck)”**

by Jacquese Armstrong

...i shed a tear for us  
the ones who lost  
a path along the way  
that we can never regain  
i shed a tear for us...

you refuse  
to look past my  
diagnosis i  
know you know  
my circumstance i  
live my life in  
such a way  
that it’s pretty much  
black and white

i am not  
    lazy  
    drooling  
    incompetent  
    unintelligent  
    or any other  
    stereotype you  
    may envision.

i am  
    caring  
    responsible  
    working hard to make it  
    and trying to be whole

we are the same...

...so i rejoice for us  
the ones who lost a  
path  
along the way  
‘cause we have gained so much more  
we are  
stronger than you  
will ever know  
our lives demand it.

**“Stigma”**

by Ben Hu

What I know about stigma:

Stigma is being judged for what I have rather than what I do

I can't change the card I was dealt because it is part of who I am

Stigma hurts the most from those who are supposed to love me no matter what

Stigma can hurt more than the illness itself

What I want to ask about stigma:

Who are they to judge?

Is mental illness not part of the human experience?

Am I no longer human and therefore lovable?

Am I a mistake?

I survived stigma:

I am still here

So I have made it my purpose

Stigma helped me grow

Grow is how I have survived

I learned from stigma

Human beings fear what they don't understand and hate what they can't be certain of

Stigma is inhumane but all too human

I learned who loves me

I am more powerful than stigma

Stigma became my reason to live:

First I suffered from stigma

But it made me learn

Now it has become my mission

To ease the pain and remove the shame

From stigma to hope:

I have had to learn not to fear the unknown and embrace uncertainties

In the process I have found the strength to endure and the wisdom to forgive

I have made my tragedy my triumph

My triumph gives me hope