“i carry the ‘m’ card
(i didn’t deal the deck)”
by Jacquese Armstrong

…i shed a tear for us
deck
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
deck
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