To Whom It May Concern;

You saw me/talked to me/interacted with me today, and you didn't know it at the time, but you affected my life.

I may have caused you extra work/patience/time today, and I wanted to take a moment to thank you for your kindness and tolerance.  If you lost your patience with me, I forgive you.  If I was cranky or out of sorts, I pray you will find it in your heart to forgive me.  Either way, my goal is to make our interaction together something you will remember by giving you this note.  I hope it changes *your* life too.

You see, I have a chronic illness.  I have a disease/disorder that is incurable.  For me, there will be no end to my struggles.  My body, which I once trusted and took for granted, has betrayed me, and I am reminded every moment of every day that my life is no longer my own.  Pain reminds me that I am under its control.  This makes it difficult at best for me to act like and do the things healthy people take for granted. But, you made that easier for me today.

My chronic illness has taken away many of the things that I used to hold precious in my life.  Family/friends/acquaintances have lost patience with me and now often avoid me, talking about me as if I were a stranger.  My children's lives go on without me as I try to participate with them, but tire and eventually watch them live without me.  Even my pets have suffered as a result of what is happening to me.

Many of the chronically ill lose their jobs and homes as well as their dreams.  Society considers us a burden and looks down on us, and we both see it, and feel it like a terrible weight in our chests.

My illness has changed almost everything about me other than who I really am on the inside, and sometimes that gets lost.

When you look in the mirror, you see your reflection and think nothing different than you did the day before.  You go on, rushing about your day doing normal things and thinking normal thoughts.

When I look in the mirror, the face and body I see staring back at me no longer look familiar.  I stare back, looking for signs of the person I used to be - I still am - knowing I'm in there... somewhere.  In that moment my body feels wooden, as if it belongs to someone else.

Chances are, you might not have even known I was sick.  Don't feel badly.  Not all illnesses are visible to the outside world.  Many are hidden.  Invisible.  I think God arranges this so others will learn of our lives and realize that we each have our own struggles and challenges even when they're hidden, and that everyone deserves respect, patience and love without judgment.

When you show kindness to someone like me, it is noticed.  It is appreciated.  It is deeply needed.  One moment from you might change another person's entire morning.  One of your smiles may be the best part of their day.

Today you helped me in some way and I wanted you to know how much that meant to me.  I want to encourage you to continue to be compassionate to others.  Even the grumble grouchy ones, for we/they need your kindness the most.

I hope you will help me and urge others to pay their compassion forward.  Our world needs more kindness, and someday, it may be them or you who learns their life has changed forever.

With sincerest gratitude,

- someone whose day is better because of you.

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