ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

From the Heart of a Down Chick
Sasha Bonay
978-1-4343-5799-1
Three Stars (out of Five)

It is poetry's challenge to say in few words what cannot be said in many. To this end a poet has available many devices to convey meaning and evoke an emotional response in readers; devices like rhythm or rhyme have the power to bypass the critical faculty of the mind and take aim directly at the heart; some of Sasha Bonay's poems do just that and manage to hit their mark.

Bonay's poetry can be sexy warm and full of memories of the roller-coaster ride between self-esteem and self-abasement that the lusty hormone-driven search for love can be for a twenty-something woman. Seeking love and instead finding sex the poet describes life-changing mistakes made in a moment of desire that mark the soul and mold the life forever; she also paints pictures of raw earthy sex at its best when two lose themselves in oneness for a moment "My man lays his head on my breasts / After we have sex / Listening to the drum of my heart beat…" ("Nobody Knows").

The perspective is that of a young urban Black woman who while still a child lost her mother and forever seeks to recapture that warm feeling of unconditional love of being totally beautiful in someone's eyes of acceptance given and received. Instead the streets bring pain and betrayal. She is conflicted by her Blackness: "Had to survive my aunt telling me how ugly dark and spoiled I was / Well actually I still haven't moved on from that…" ("I Tried to Survive"). A child is born bringing worry hope and a call to live for that which is larger than self: "Yeah I've made my life complicated / But what I hold my dreams haven't faded / And I intend to stay dedicated / To the struggle for my daughter / With or without her father…" ("Lyric's Song"). Poems written from Iraq express the loneliness of one separated from those held dear: "Across blue oceans and dry hot deserts / I can hear your heart calling to me…" ("Divinely Devoted").

Not all of the poems are equally effective and weeding out the lesser works would make for a volume more even in quality and style; overall Bonay's work as presented in this collection is not for young readers—graphic descriptions of sexual activity vulgar language and poems describing physical and emotional abuse or drug use are not reading for a child yet the lonely child in Bonay calls out to the lonely child who still lives in all who were deprived of the conditions children need to thrive and her survivor's heart will encourage others who may be on the brink of giving up.

Sasha Bonay was raised in New York City's South Bronx and has been writing since the age of nine. *From the Heart of A Down Chick* is her first book and her plans are to continue writing and publishing works reflecting a "voice from the streets."