FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

General

Una Vida
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To protagonist Dr. Alvaro Cruz, his research into the brain and its various diseases was always a clinical enterprise. He is a man so driven by his quest to understand the human brain that he's lost sight of humanity. That is, until he meets a jazz-singing Alzheimer's patient named Una Vida and the cast of characters who inhabit her life, past and present. "What surprised Cruz as much as the clarity and power of her last note when she finished the song was the tear he felt running down his cheek," Bazan writes. "She had touched him to the core, like a mystical escort come to bridge one consciousness with another."

Dr. Bazan, a neuroscientist who established and now heads the LSU Neuroscience Center of Excellence, roots his first novel in his own personal experiences of moving from Argentina to New Orleans, researching brain diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, and cultivating a love of jazz music and a knowledge of the colorful musicians who spread its sound throughout the world. From this foundation grows the mystery of Una Vida, a once famous jazz musician now wandering the riverside levees of New Orleans, lost in the mixed-up maze of memories that Alzheimer's has created in her mind. Dr. Cruz feels inescapably pulled to this woman and determines to find a way to help her while decoding exactly who she is. As he chases clues through the city, he meets characters who contribute to the picture: an ex-con banjo player who watches out for Una Vida on the levee, a drug-addicted potter who knows more than she's letting on, and an old carriage driver named Handsome John, who leads Cruz to a place with hidden answers.

A general knowledge of brain anatomy and Argentinian history would be helpful for readers, but is not necessary to enjoy the protagonist's journey of self-discovery that mirrors his investigation of Una Vida. Written with obvious passion for music and the mind, this novel will resonate with readers who have experience watching a loved one suffer the decline brought on by brain disease. Despite the sober subject matter, Bazan infuses his novel with hope that rides along on music by the likes of Bessie Smith and Charlie Parker.

Christine Canfield