ABSTRACT

RYAN CHASE CRAVER. *The Queens of Club Pygmalion.* (Under the direction of Professor Maria Pramaggiore.)

Fox is an outsider—the bourgeoning, brooding artist-philosopher that we already love—but, significantly, a gay teenager living in a small mountain town. Through his eyes—or his Polaroid camera—we see the eccentricities of Southern life and the intersecting lives of its many diverse characters: from his ex-body-builder mother Sandy and unemployed deer-hunting father Freddy, to his ghostly grandmother, who appears to him as a water nymph, a fire demon, a statue, and finally, an angel.

Enter into Fox's life, and into the racist, homophobic community of his trailer park, Lana Spring, a striking, statuesque, immediate beauty wearing wedge heels and sipping iced tea from a wine glass. She's outspoken, smart, and strong, but hides a tragic, unfinished love affair. Their friendship forms fast, and Fox hides where he's spending his summer days. After Fox endures a brutal beating by his father when he won't eat a deer's heart to prove his masculinity, Lana steals him away to the beachside home of Mother Dust and his hidden Club Pygmalion.

Here, Fox finally finds a place where he belongs, a place where he is able to come out of his shell among a comical, eccentric group of drag queens. But Paradise is short: Fox's mother demands Fox return home and promises a new life with her new husband. Fox complies, but back in the mountains, things haven't changed. The tragedy of his past—his father's beating—haunt him, and Fox must stand up for himself, believing himself to have killed his father with a bow and arrow. The black angel wings of his grandmother appear to him and carry him to safety.