

ALTAR-ED BODIES



CLARITY HAYNES

a sacred heart is not immaculate

Kimberly Alidio

The cheating hearts of nurses were clean and thorny. In pre-op they clicked binders open and closed. One kept saying *NPO* and used her phone to remember the Latin. My diaspora took over the late-night shift and entered, one by one, to touch machines. It called me *ma'am* and said we should *baby* the IV port. It was the first to ask, *Does it hurt?* Through the door, it changed a large trash bag with a faraway smile. I was bilious, literally, itchy all over. I sent a floor nurse from the Mountain Province back with news of my parentage. It's spreading, I said to my lover as the door closed. Sure enough, the exiting nurse hugged me and said, *I didn't know! Lita had to tell me!* Above eye-level, Sophia on "Golden Girls" lay on a hospital bed. The anesthesiologist served what he called a *margarita* and later said, *It was a pleasure.* Through the doorway, a woman complained about beautiful healing centers. My lover roamed, found the chapel, and returned with a saint card. She had made gentle pasta the night before, and from the bed I read aloud to her from Wikipedia the difference between the *sacred heart* and the *immaculate heart*. For example: the specialists stood like Superman to declare their procedures, and the nurses let them. Above me, Alyssa Milano transported on "Charmed" to save a woman and I thought, *We are in the aftermath of retribution.* The attending didn't stutter but stood unsure in the doorway.

