

DANIEL KHALASTCHI

NOTES FROM AN ADJUNCT PROFESSOR
AT A MAJOR AMERICAN UNIVERSITY:

You make a cross of split
forks and cedar and hang it
on the wall to protect me
while I teach. When I ask

what you are afraid of, you
remove a list from the inside
pocket of your purse and begin
to read with admittedly great

thunder and silence—*pregnancy
pacts, you say; boys with white
hands following you home; ball gags;
panic in a crowd; wet boots; that they'll*

*find out you're Jewish; the Internet;
glycerin soap; rap music; halter tops; the over-
sexualization of aging men in positions
of influence; what they will offer*

*in your office; what you will offer
in your office; their age; your
immaturity; a natural disaster in which
you give your lunch to a group*

*of college freshman so they can
survive an extra 48 hours and you
die a slow, emaciating death; a car
wreck; leaving town; how many of them*

*admit to anal sex; beaches; insurance; rain-
water; birthmarks; and pregnancy*

pacts. I never ask you about the
repetition, but you confess, later at

an Italian restaurant, that the most frightening
thing, the most terrifying thing, the thing
that keeps you from leaving the house when
I invite you to magic shows, is that somewhere

along the line you've agreed to carry an unspecified
man's baby. You say you know the call
is coming. That you can't
back out. That you are sure when I see you

sick in the mornings I will take the dog and
the Chrysler and leave after speaking
very authoritatively on the nature of
fidelity. *But how would I know it isn't*

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mine? I ask, rubbing my palms against
the raise of my wallet. *That's why I made you*
this cross, you say. *When it happens, I pray my*
uterus just collapses.