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There is something fascinating about reading other peoples mail if you are allowed to. Here is your chance to read the letters of American writer Sylvia Plath, which she wrote home to her mother from a hotel where she had a summer job as a waitress. At the time, she was a college student and was still at the start of her writing career. Through the letter we learn of her changing thoughts and moods concerning,

boys and writing.

THE BEGINNING OF A CAREER  
Sylvia Plath  
The Belmont Hotel, cape Cod  
June 11, 1952  
Dear Mother, Your amazing telegram [telegram announcing \$500 Mademoiselle prize for "Sunday at the Mintons," which I forwarded] came just as I was scrubbing tables in the shady interior of The Belmont dining room. I was so excited that I screamed and actually threw my arms around the head waitress who no doubt thinks I am rather insane! Anyhow, psychologically, the moment couldnt have been better. I felt tired -- ones first nights sleep in a new place never is peaceful -- and I didnt get much! To top it off, I was the only girl waitress here, and had been scrubbing furniture, washing dishes and silver, lifting tables, etc. since 8 a.m. Also, I just learned since I am completely inexperienced, I am not going to be working in the main dining room, but in the "side hall" where the managers and top hotel brass eat. So, tips will no doubt net much less during the summer and the company be less interesting. So I was beginning to worry about money when your

telegram came. God! To think "Sunday at the Mintons" is one of two prize stories to be put in a big national slick! Frankly, I can't believe it! The first thing I thought of was: Mother can keep her intersession money and buy some pretty clothes and a special trip or something! At least I get a winter coat and extra special suit out of the Mintons. I think the prize is \$500! ME! Of all people! . . . So it's really looking up around here, now that I don't have to be scared stiff about money . . . Oh, I say, even if my feet kill me after this first week, and I drop 20 trays, I will have the beach, boys to bring me beer, sun, and young gay companions. What a life. Love, your crazy old daughter. Sivvy

June 12. 1952

No doubt after I catch up on sleep, and learn to balance trays high on my left hand, I'll feel much happier. As it is now, I feel stuck in the midst of a lot of loud, brassy Irish Catholics, and the only way I can jolly myself is to say, "Oh, well, it's only for a summer, and I can maybe write about them all." At least I've got a new name for my next protagonist -- Marley, a gabby girl who knows her way around but good. The ration of boys to girls has gotten less and less, so I'll be lucky if I get tagged by the youngest kid here. Lots of the girls are really wise, drinking flirts. As for me, being the conservative, quiet, gracious type, I don't stand much chance of dating some of the cutest ones . . . If I can only get "in" as a pal with these girls, and never for a minute let them know I'm the gentle intellectual type, it'll be O.K. As for the Mille news, I don't think it's really sunk in yet. I felt sure they made a mistake, or that you'd made it up to cheer me. The big advantage will be that I won't have to worry about earning barely \$300 this summer. I would really have been sick

otherwise. I cant wait till August when I can go casually down to the drug store and pick up a slick copy of Mlle, flip to the index, and see ME, one of two college girls in the U.S.! Really, when I think of how I started it over spring vacation, polished it at school, and sat up till midnight in the Haven House kitchen typing it amidst noise and chatter, I cant get over how the story soared to where it did... I get great pleasure out of sharing it [her feeling about the story] with you, who really understand how terribly much it means as a tangible testimony that I have got a germ of writing ability. The only thing, I probably wont have a chance to win Mlle again, so Ill try for a guest editorship maybe next or my senior year, and set my sights for the Atlantic. God, Im glad I can talk about it with you -- probably youre the only outlet that Ill have that wont get tired of my talking about writing ... Speaking again of Henry and Liz, it was a step for me to a story where the protagonist isnt always ME, and proved that I am beginning to use imagination to transform the actual incident. I was scared that would never happen, but I think its an indication that my perspective is broadening. Sometime I think -- heck, I dont know why I didnt stay home all summer, writing, doing physical science, and having a small part-time job. I could "afford" to now, but it doesnt do much good to yearn about that, I guess. Although it would have been nice. Oh well, Ill cheer up. I love you. Your own Sivvy

June 15, 1952

Dear Mother.... Do write me letters, Mommy, because I am in a very dangerous of feeling sorry for myself ... Just at present, life is awful. Mademoiselle seems quite unreal, and I am exhausted, scared, incompetent, unenergetic and generally low in spirits ... Working in

side hall puts me part, and I feel completely uprooted and clumsy. The more I see the main hall girls expertly getting special dishes, fixing shaved ice and fruit, etc., the more I get an inferiority complex and feel that each day in side hall leaves me further behind ... But as tempted as I am to be a coward and escape by crawling back home, I have resolved to give it a good months trial -- till July 10 ... Dont worry about me, but do send me little pellets of advice now and then. June 24, 1952... Last night I went on a "gang" birthday party at the "Sand Bar" where we sang and talked for a few hours. There were about forty of us kids from the hotel. I managed by some magic to get myself seated next to a fellow in his first year at Harvard Law -- and he was just a dear ... The best part was when we came back. It was a beautiful clear starry night, and Clark went in to get me two of his sweaters to wear because it was cold, and brought out a book of T.S. Eliots poems. So we sat on a bench where I could just barely read the print, and he put his head in my lap and I read aloud to him for a while. Most nice. The only thing is I am so inclined to get fond of someone who will do things with me like that -- always inclined to be too metaphysical and serious conversationally -- thats my main trouble ... So glad to hear the check from Mlle is real. I hardly could believe it. Just now I am mentally so disorganized that I cant retain knowledge or think at all. The work is still new enough to be tiring, what with three changes a day into uniforms, and I am so preoccupied by mechanics of living and people that I cant yet organize and assimilate all the chaos of experience pouring in on me. In spite of everything, I still have my good old sense of humor and

manage to laugh a good deal of the time ... Ill make the best of whatever comes my way. Much love to you, SivvyNew  
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