

## Beguiled by romance knowingly and willingly

The first time I heard *The Continental* I was sitting on the carpet alongside my sister Louise in front of a big console TV, mesmerized, the light from the changing images flickering across our faces and soaking into our minds.

I was 7 and she was 5, and we were all caught up in the music and Fred and Ginger's dancing.

"You kiss while you're dancing, it's continental, it's continental."

Oh, it was so wonderful. We stopped eating popcorn from our cereal bowls, dropped to our backs — and sighed.

We had no idea that Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers were famous. We discovered them. And we discovered the giddy, moony, dreamy way their music and dancing made us feel. Smooth Fred in tails, feisty Ginger in silky, glimmering gowns that looked even better when she danced.

They met, fell in love, parted in a misunderstanding, then reunited, dancing all the way, inspired by clever and romantic Gershwin, Berlin and Porter songs. Eventually we watched all of their movies, enamored by the repeated pattern. Their flirtation, the music, and the amorous play that was their dancing mixed into a concoction that washed over us like rapture.

"It has a passion, *The Continental*, an invitation to moonlight and romance."

No kissing, but plenty of tingles.

Fred and Ginger inspired our dress-up games. In her formal ball gown (a crinoline slip over pedal pushers) Louise danced with her invisible Fred while I danced with mine, stylishly outfitted for afternoon cocktails in a beret and grandma's old fox stole.

"It's quite the fashion, *The Continental* because you tell of



SENTINEL FILE

Grace in motion. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers dance.



### My WORD

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your love while you dance."

Gliding, dipping, twirling, fluttering, our eyes hazy and half closed, we danced, sang and sighed.

I didn't have the vocabulary to understand the way I felt when I moved to the music and stared adoringly into my pretend partner's eyes as he stared into mine. I didn't know the word romance, and I certainly didn't know the meaning of passion. But I felt his cheek against my cheek, his arm circling my waist, and his

body gently leaning into mine, leading me in graceful dance steps. I was oh-so-pleasantly muddled and besotted.

Fred and Ginger had bewitched me with the notion that this was what it was to be in love.

"You'll know, before the dance is through that you're in love with her, and she's in love with you. You'll find while you're dancing that there's a rhythm in your heart and soul; a certain rhythm that you can't control."

Fred and Ginger. All glorious dancing and glittering wardrobe set against a shiny art deco background. Always perfectly in step in each other's arms. I was enchanted — not aware that Fred and Ginger were a fiction. Now I am an adult with the maturity and experience to know better. Still, I am beguiled by their romantic ideas. I choose to be.