

A couple stands in a ruined city at sunset. The scene is filled with the warm glow of the setting sun, which illuminates the silhouettes of the couple and the surrounding ruins. The city is in ruins, with many buildings reduced to skeletal frames. In the foreground, there are rubble, rocks, and some purple flowers growing in the debris. The sky is filled with dramatic, orange and yellow clouds. A large, dark planet or moon is visible in the upper left corner. Two birds are flying in the sky. The title "LOVE AMONG THE RUINS" is overlaid in the center of the image.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

Love Among the Ruins

The temple was falling apart around them—stone slabs crumbling, dust choking the air, the distant rumble of something very large and very unfriendly waking from its slumber. It was, in short, a terrible time for romance. Which was exactly why it happened.

"Uh, watch out!" he shouted, yanking her back just as a spear trap fired from the wall, missing her by inches. "I saw it," she lied, brushing imaginary dust from her shoulder. "I totally had it under control. "He raised an eyebrow. "Sure. That's why you almost got turned into a kebab."

She scowled, ignoring the way her heart did an annoying little flip. "Oh, like you didn't almost step on that pressure plate five minutes ago?" "I was testing it!" "With your foot?" "Listen," he said, stepping over a pile of rubble to offer her a hand, "I am extremely skilled in not dying. You should take notes."

She took his hand. Sparks. Actual, ridiculous sparks. It was almost embarrassing. Then the ceiling cracked ominously above them. "Less flirting, more running!" she yelped, grabbing his wrist and dragging him toward the exit. They sprinted through the ruins, dodging collapsing pillars and narrowly avoiding a pit of very pointy spikes. At one point, she shoved him out of the way of a swinging blade and somehow ended up with his arms around her waist. They froze, faces inches apart, breathing hard.

"So," he said, voice strangely casual given the deadly situation, "this is romantic, right?" "Oh yeah," she deadpanned. "Nothing gets me swooning like imminent death." "Good to know." Another stone crashed behind them. "Run now, flirt later?"

"Deal." They burst out into the jungle, panting and bruised but alive. Behind them, the ruins gave one last groan and collapsed entirely.

He grinned at her. "Well, we lost the treasure, almost died, and I'm pretty sure I pulled something." She smiled back, ignoring the way her stomach did another annoying flip. "But we had fun, right?" "Yeah," he admitted, rubbing the back of his neck. "And, you know... maybe after we find an inn, we could... continue the whole 'not-dying' thing over dinner?" She arched an eyebrow. "Are you asking me out?" "Depends. Are you saying yes?" She rolled her eyes but couldn't hide her grin. "Guess you'll have to find out."

And with that, she walked ahead—leaving him, for once, completely speechless.