A Stolen Love and the Forgotten Promise is an RPG made by Fomar0153 and Indra, who is a potato as of the writing of this, for the IGMC 2022 contest. The game came in second place so there are some expectations the player will have. My playthrough was on normal difficulty and I unlocked all the things available in a single run in just over three hours. Some character names are obfuscated for spoiler reasons.

**Characters**

The whole cast was fun and memorable, no character felt out of place or that they were shoehorned in to chase a current trend. The main party, consisting of Rowan, Eva, and Alexander, all had their own personality quirks and meshed well with the rest of the cast. The villains had believable goals, there was no moustache twirling to be had. The supporting cast helped the plot along while avoiding becoming convenient plot devices.

Rowan is the main character. They are customizable by the player and can be male or female which causes some dialogue changes along with respective graphics changes. Rowan is a berserker and breaks things well.

Alexander is Rowan’s friend and a court mage. He’s also a huge nerd and knows legalese.

Eva is Rowan’s soon-to-be sister-in-law. She’s also a paladin and part of a very rich family.

Ezra is Rowan’s love interest. Their gender is customizable by the player which alters graphics and some dialogue. Ezra might be rich, but she is not a wallflower and can handle herself in most situations.

Grandma is Rowan’s grandma and a berserker or legend. Loves axes and smiting demons.

Dad is Rowan’s dad and follows the family tradition of breaking things for a living. He’s also a berserker, but not quite as famous as Grandma.

Villain is…the villain of the story. They really want to interrupt Rowan and Ezra’s wedding for some reason.

**Story**

The story is quite fun and shirks some of the common RPG clichés while giving the player some involvement through dialogue options. The tone is lighthearted and there is a good mix of subtle and overt humor. The scene starts with trepidation, anticipation, and a dose of fury and darkness. Rowan is going to be late for their wedding to their beloved Ezra! After some shenanigans the wedding seems to be proceeding as normal, when suddenly disaster strikes! The wedding is in danger and Rowan’s future happiness is in jeopardy! What could have possibly happened?! Will Rowan’s rage threaten to derail the situation, or will they keep cool, fix the situation, and finally get married?

**Gameplay**

The gameplay follows the familiar RPG formula of exploring maps, investigating people and objects, and fighting battles with monsters. The maps were well designed and there were secret paths and a lot of interactable objects. If it looks important or sparkles make sure to check it out. Talking to the npcs can lead to humorous moments, story progression or learning about the world, and cold hard cash rewards.

In classic RPG fashion there is an emphasis on combat which plays out in a turn-based style. There are no random battles, all of the enemies are visible on the map so the player can fight them at their own pace. Character and monster turn order is displayed so the player can plan the best sequence of actions. The player can choose to attack, use skills or spells, guard, and use items. Rowan can use alternate versions of their skills under the Berserker command which can alter what the skills do. Except for an optional fight the battles were not overly difficult and could be solved by making use of the skills and equipment the game gives the player. There is a variety of equipment each character can use along with up to three accessory slots. These accessories provide a lot of useful effects, such as protection against charm or giving the character a counter attack, and provide for a lot of customization.

The game includes a lot of quality of life options and information for the player. In the options menu the player can change the auto dash, autosave, battle animations, audio, UI, screen resolutions, amongst other options. There are three battle difficulty options that should allow a player to play to their skill and comfort levels. There are also tutorials and a key item that lets the player view tutorials they have unlocked.

**Skill Trees**

A major part of the way combat plays out is through the skill system. Each character has three skill trees with five skills in linear progression. The player can freely choose between the trees at any time when not in combat. The chosen tree gives a passive boost, which can sometimes be extremely powerful such as Rowan’s Reaver style which gives them hp on damaging an enemy. Fighting battles unlocks more skills in the chosen tree and skill points, gained every two levels, are used to purchase the skills. I fought every battle and was able to complete two trees and start on the third by the end of the game so planning out which skills would be useful is advised. These skills, both passive and active, can be used even if the character is not currently using that tree. Passive skills can be activated or deactivated from their menu and allow a lot of customization to the character while giving them the strength they need to face more dangerous foes.

Alexander’s tree bonuses are all good, but the chance of extra action by the Time Mage is very potent for bosses. Time Mage’s skills could prove useful in difficult fights, but I did not have enough skill points or battles to unlock them all. Elementalist’s aoe spells make short work of a lot of battles and help with MP economy and the passive bonus boosting elemental damage when exploiting enemy weaknesses is useful. Magician’s skills are interesting, but battles do not last long enough on normal difficulty for them to shine, although the tree bonus of reducing MP cost came in handy.

Rowan’s Reaver tree bonus is quite good for survivability since it gets good amounts of hp on damaging an enemy. Reaver focuses on raw damage, extra attacks, and swapping health for damage. The Slayer tree is solid and focuses on critical hits and debuffs. Serene Rampage is mostly passive skills that would be useful, but I didn’t have enough points to try them out.

Eva’s trees have some crossover, but I found the Faith tree’s bonus healing potential very useful since she is the only character with an AOE heal. The Faith tree is all about healing and has the invaluable Heal Area spell and the MP +50% passive skill. The Martial tree has useful warrior type skills and allows Eva to work as a tank, especially with a combination of the Cover passive skill and the tree bonus evasion. The Divinity tree’s passive reduces MP cost and has offensive holy magic and defensive passives, but I didn’t have the points to try it out.

**Art**

The art style of the sprites is a very clean 8-bit style. There was no confusion as to what I was looking at, unlike some styles, and the sprites were very appealing. Important characters have portraits which are likewise clean and fit the overall aesthetic. Battle sprites and animations for the characters, monsters, and backgrounds are very nice and have a touch of Final Fantasy I-III’s style. The art was primarily done by Koji Marumugi.

**Music and Sound**

The music, created by Wingless Seraph, was good and fit the situation it played in. The style seemed to give a nod to the old JRPG classics while being its own thing. The sound effects were effective, and some will be very familiar to RPG Maker enthusiasts. None of the music or sound effects were grating which is a huge plus in my book.

**Bugs/Issues**

Overall, the game ran well and there was no significant bug or glitch I could find. The only minor glitch I think I found was the chainmail undershirt providing +2 Dex instead of its stated +4.

**Conclusion**

A Stolen Love and the Forgotten Promise is a very enjoyable, if short, RPG. The writing is very well done and the story is light-hearted and enjoyable which leaves the player wanting more. The art style is clean, readable, and evokes the feeling of old school RPGs. The skill system and wide variety of accessories allow for a myriad of combinations and allows the player to fine-tune the characters to their preferences or to overcome challenges. The battles overall were not too difficult, the optional fight was the only significant challenge on normal difficulty which required changing up and optimizing some skills and equipment. Rating games is difficult, but I give A Stolen Love and the Forgotten Promise a 4.5 fluffy sheep out of 5.