

# *Vanguard Saga*

## *I. Revolution*

## ***War is coming. Where will you stand?***

In *Vanguard Saga*, traditional turn-based combat meets rhythmic, timed action elements and a dynamic conversation system in an unprecedented blend. Play the role of a revolutionary in the Kingdom of Vascón, a land divided by the laws of magick, and change the face of the country. Use unique abilities in and out of battle to traverse a vibrant 2D world; fight and defeat your enemies in fast-paced combat, or negotiate a truce through nuanced dialogue; unravel a complex web of betrayal and intrigue through your choices. Will your home be destroyed by civil war, or emerge into a new age of enlightenment?

## ***Overview – A Flash of Tension***

The demo build will feature a selection of scenes from the beginning of the game. Players will control Lorea, a teen-aged healer leading her younger brothers and sisters to safety as her people are tried for witchcraft, and will quickly be joined by Miguel, a student of magick at the illustrious (and notably neutral) Academy of Arcane Mastery who sympathizes with her people's plight and has struck out alone to aid them. Together they will navigate the twisting streets of Vascón's capital city, evading pursuit by the dogmatic and royally sanctioned Temple Knights, as well as restless civilians who support the crown and fear the so-called "witches."

Players will acquire experience, items, currency, and even new allies beyond the initial two. They will be able to customize playable characters with different gear, inventory, and character-specific classes that each confer different skills and abilities. Enemies can be fought, avoided, or persuaded to stand down; with the proper coaxing, some of them might even join your cause! Far from a nonstop chase scene, too, the demo will feature shops and rest points and encourage the player to explore and solve puzzles in the environment. All of this culminates in a climactic showdown with the Temple Captain, the head of the witch hunt.

## ***The Quest – Flight of the Accused***

The game opens with a chase scene: The main character barrels through the streets of the capital with her younger siblings following at her heels. Behind them are a large group of Temple Knights, spouting accusations of heresy and rounding up any suspected citizens they can get their hands on. A smaller squadron breaks from the main force and runs after Lorea; the player then takes control, attempting to guide her to safety. This chase ultimately culminates in a short, partially scripted battle sequence made to show off some of the combat mechanics and Lorea's unique skills. This scene culminates in a rescue by the second main character, Miguel, who sends the knights packing with a powerful fire spell.

Guided by Miguel, the player continues their escape and ultimately arrives at Doorsmeet, an Academy merchants' walk "obscured in space," which can be accessed from anywhere in the world—but only with a specially enchanted key. Lorea will be safe here, Miguel assures her; but her conscience won't allow her to sit and wait, not knowing the fates of her friends and missing family members. She decides to return to Akellarre, and though he is reluctant to let her go at first, Miguel becomes enamored of her courage and joins her in a bid to resist the Temple Knights' advance. In the final scene of the demo, the player controls Lorea and Miguel as they scour the city for any in need of aid, or those willing to join their cause. They fight their way through knights (and their civilian supporters) to the city square, where the Temple Captain is gathering captives for transport, and confront him to stop the hunt and save the innocents.

## ***Playable Characters – Budding Heroes***

The player will control a party of characters, beginning with only one and reaching a maximum of four. Lorea, and later Miguel when he joins the action, will remain constant; the last two can be selected from a handful of candidates the player may optionally acquire throughout. The main characters are a pair of mages with unique strengths and weaknesses, designed to showcase the extreme variation present in any one of the game's archetypes. The demo will be designed such that it is possible, if somewhat difficult, to reach the end with only the two main characters, but players will be encouraged to form a full party of four.

### ***Character Sketch – Lorea Arana de Nájera***

Lorea is a modest, kind, yet emotionally reserved girl who regards family above all else. Though mostly versed in healing magick, she is unyielding in defense of her loved ones and inspires others with her quiet bravery. Despite her age, she is often looked to in times of crisis—whether she will be able to shoulder this burden remains to be seen. When the Temple Knights marched on her neighborhood, she wasted no time gathering up her younger siblings and making an escape, though in the confusion she was separated from her parents and elder brother.

In-game, Lorea is the first controllable character the player is introduced to and will remain a member of any party the player forms. In the demo she is rescued from a squad of templars by Miguel, who urges her to flee to safety, but she decides to stay behind and help the rest of her people escape. Her skill set includes a wide array of support spells; she can cure her allies' wounds and ailments as well as bolster their abilities. She also has access to a few defensive maneuvers, such as a blast attack that does minimal damage but knocks nearby enemies backwards. Her class structure will reflect this focus on support, with only a handful of offensive options open to her at all.

### ***Character Sketch – Miguel Sandoval***

A bold and boisterous rabble-rouser with a strong sense of justice, Miguel could never sit still knowing innocent people need his help. Unfortunately this puts him at cross-purposes with the international Academy where he studies magick, as they are reluctant to intervene in disputes regardless of their nature. It was only his desire to placate his mother, a warm-hearted and doting widow, that had kept him from taking to the streets to fight against the Temple's ill-conceived witch hunt—until now. Miguel appears early on in the demo, rescuing Lorea and escorting her to safety before reluctantly allowing her back into the fray.

Mechanically, Miguel is something of Lorea's opposite: an offensive mage with many powerful, damaging spells—but that's not the only trick up his sleeve. His quick tongue and natural charm make him an excellent conversationalist, and he has many skills geared towards ending fights without bloodshed. When forced into combat, he compensates for poor defenses with spells and abilities that make him harder to hit or inflict punishment on would-be attackers. Overall he is a wily, multi-faceted character who can fill many roles.

## ***Opponents – Misguided, Mischievous, Malicious***

The bulk of the player's opposition consists of the Vascan Royal Knights of the Holy Temple, also known as the Temple Knights or simply templars. The order, headed and sanctioned by the King of Vascón, professes faith in the Lady Aloft, and by her proclamation reviles those who practice what are deemed "forbidden magicks." What meets this definition is intentionally vague; this is all little more than a pretense for religious persecution and mass arrests, which are spreading farther and growing bolder every day. The templars are disciplined fighters who, true to their archetype, wield standard weaponry and holy magicks together, making them difficult to defend against even in single combat—and they generally travel in groups. They will attempt to capture any accused who present no threat, and kill those who do.

Not all citizens are under suspicion of heresy. Some have even bought into the propaganda and begun hunting their neighbors right along with the templars. These spiteful, fear-mongering folk may bar the player's way, or attempt to capture or kill them personally. However, as a rule they are a degree more susceptible than the templars to a convincing counter-argument; they can often be rebuffed through conversation, and some may even switch sides.

## ***Character Sketches – The Chariot, Temple Captain & King's Right Hand***

Three enemies of note will accost the player. The Chariot is a Temple Knight with a zeal for violence that disturbs even his fellows; he takes no prisoners and shows no mercy. In battle he is supported by a pair of generic templars, who provide support while he devastates the party with powerful strikes. Confronting him without suitable preparation is a death sentence; however, it is possible to see him punished by the Captain for overstepping his bounds, if the right conditions are met.

Unfortunately there is no way out of a confrontation the Captain himself, as he holds Lorea's friends and family captive and refuses to release them. He serves as the final boss of the demo, accompanied by templars like the Chariot but boasting a more well-rounded skill set and better synergy with his teammates; though the Chariot's power is overwhelming, the Captain may well be the stronger foe. He cannot be persuaded to back down, as he wholly believes his cause is just and his actions are necessary.

The last antagonist of note doesn't actually fight the player at all. At some point after returning to the fray, a man appears before Lorea and Miguel who claims he is not affiliated with the Temple Knights, but rather serves the king directly. He challenges the two's decision to fight back, implying that there is much they do not know about the unrest in Vascón. Depending on how the player responds he may leave in peace or alert the templars to the party's position, but he ultimately seems unmotivated to capture them.

## ***Environment – The World of Vanguard Saga***

The setting of the game is ultimately meant as the home of a much larger story spanning many entries, but this particular story is set in a country analogous to 17th-century Europe, particularly Spain and France. The Kingdom of Vascón is an independent nation with no official religion, which is suddenly disturbed when its neighbors pass a treaty uniting them and putting pressure on it to adopt their beliefs and systems of government. This pressure seems to have worked, as the reigning King has begun a campaign of persecution against those who hold fast to the old ways; and here we find our protagonists, struggling against a system they don't quite understand to protect their freedom and their loved ones.

## ***Area Sketches – Capital City Akelarre and the Mysterious Doorsmeet***

The demo takes place primarily in two locales. The first is Akelarre, the capital of Vascón, where the nation's divide is most apparent and most aggressive. The city itself is a mess—buildings as old as a century stand alongside those erected only in the past few years, forming a maze of alleys that expand and contract, snake back and forth, lead to dead ends or shops and houses hidden from the main roads, and so forth. More recently paved cobblestone streets attempt to assert order over the chaos, but there is still plenty of space to get lost—or to hide, if you know your way around. The bulk of the combat takes place in this area, while some time is devoted to exploration, stealth, and dialogue.

When the city becomes too dangerous, the party retreats to Doorsmeet, a shopping arcade sponsored by the Academy. Doorsmeet is meant to invoke the wonder and strangeness of Diagon Alley—somewhere you can only go if you know it exists, a place you can suddenly end up by entering a door or crossing through curtains you've been through a dozen times before, and one as lively and colorful as the many, diverse people who populate it. Compared to the tense and confusing atmosphere of Akelarre, Doorsmeet might seem like a stroll through an amusement park. Here the party can take a quick rest, spend money on items and gear, and maybe even learn a bit about the world at large.

## ***Menus – An Enchanting Interface***

In the vein of classic JRPGs, the player will be able to view various parameters of their character and the system in general at any time by pressing a button. Combat will utilize an interface heavily inspired by the Final Fantasy series' ATB (Active Time Battle) system, where the player selects characters' actions one at a time from a menu. Actions (both allies' and enemies') are performed in sequence based on when they were finalized, and then a timer counts down until those characters can act again. Character classes will determine which skills are available, and some skills can be used in *and* out of combat—though many of these skills have resource costs the player must bear in mind.

## ***Controls – Mastering One's Craft***

Players will navigate the world using a simple set of directional buttons, as well as a multi-purpose interaction button. They may also pull up the game menu and select skills from their characters' lists, which may produce a change in the environment depending on when and where they are used. Most of the combat is performed by selecting options in menus; however, unique to this game is the presence of real-time inputs that can determine the success or failure of an action or modify it in some way.

For instance, pressing the action button with the right timing may cause Miguel to deflect an incoming attack with telekinesis, while holding it down may allow Lorea to delay the casting of a healing spell to a point where it would have more impact. Different skills may have rhythmic or timed inputs that increase or decrease their strength, depending on the player's dexterity.

## ***Sounds – The Siren Song of Revolution***

Ideally the demo will feature a full array of sound effects for walking, running, fighting, and so on, and potentially a layer of background noise depending on the environment. Music should make heavy use of leitmotif; for example, the Academy might be represented by classical strings, and the Temple by a foreboding organ. Individual characters may also have themed instruments, such as a plucked acoustic guitar representing Miguel's rogueish charm, or a gentle pan flute for Lorea. Establishing themes enhances the different moods of a game, and arguably makes them stand out more.

## ***A Revolution, in More Ways than One***

*Vanguard Saga* has a rich history. Despite its many attempts to be something wholly new and different, it owes much of its design and aesthetic to the JRPGs of yore: Final Fantasy, Breath of Fire, Shin Megami Tensei, Super Mario RPG, and more. It aims to be the next step in the evolution of the genre... a step that, for one reason or another, the creators of these classics never took. This is no mere nostalgia trip, either. True to the name, it is an adventure into the unknown—a reinvented approach to a beloved formula. Let this fantasy steal your heart, the way your old favorites once did. Experience the magic of *Vanguard Saga – I. Revolution!*