A Test in Tear
By Tam al'Moff

Summary

Background:

Rand Al'Thor has taken Tear and declared himself The Dragon Reborn. Prophecy has been fulfilled and the sword that is not a sword is in the hands of a man who can channel. The Aeil have come across the spine of the world and are protecting him as he studies prophecy and decides where to move next. His enemies meanwhile are plotting to test him. Into this crucible come the player characters, they are contacted by an old acquaintance who needs their help and in the end they will aid the Dragon in his battle for survival. For 3-4 players of 3rd Level

Introduction:

As the PC's are passing through Aringill they receive a note to meet with someone at the Teamsters Tavern. This is the captain of the guard from a 'conspiracy in shadows' or another PC contact the players find clues in Tanchico that lead them to Tear. He informs them of his belief that a merchant by the name of Vermis was in league with the wool merchant. He had sent a friend to ask questions about this merchant and he had not returned, the captain was in the process of going to Tear to look for his friend when he received news that the Stone of Tear had been taken by a Male channeler who had declared himself the True Dragon. His duty now is to return home to be with his family and the only group of people he knows to be trustworthy just happen to be passing through the same town. The pattern has woven itself to bring the players to the same place where they are most needed.

The characters will arrive in Tear a week after the Dragon and the mysterious Aeil have taken over the fortress known as the Stone. Various attempts to gain information regarding Vermis will alert the local Darkfriend conspirators that another group needs dealt with. After the ambush the ringleader will be ripped to shreds by a Fade. Eventually the characters will discover that a Lord has made some strange purchases lately and has sold a number of items from the Age of Legends on the black market to finance it.

Seven days later the characters will witness Matt having an episode in a bar where he imagines he is attacked by a pack of cards and three days after that trace the Lords men back to a ranch north of Tear too late to stop eight barges full of Trollocs but just in time to scupper enough to cause the attack to fail. They will also meet an Aeil warrior Blademaster who has been turned to the Dark against his will. They will then rush back to Tear in time to aid the defenders as they try to repel the attackers from the forces of the Dark One.

An old Aquaintence

You receive an anonymous note asking you to meet at the Teamsters Tavern, and ask for Master Baren. The man they find is the captain of the guard from Baerlon. He has come East to see what has happened to his friend who has been making inquiries on his behalf but with
the announcements about the Dragon he wishes to return home to be with his family and to fulfill his duties in the city.

It is good to see you again. Once again I thank you for what you have done for my family and my city. Since we last met I have had a scholar look over the papers of that damned Darkfriend, he has discovered an irregularity that points to money laundering for a merchant named Vermis of Tear. I have no contacts in Tear to speak of but I asked a merchant named Alacs Mitcha to make inquiries for me regarding this. Neither he nor his guards have returned and are now a month overdue. It is a terrible time we live in that I suspect my own men of being Darkfriend but I can trust only you. I have some money which I have brought with me should you wish it. As you are the only ones I can trust I must beg you to discover what has happened to my friend.”

As the characters are sitting around discussing what they should do they may notice a lively debate going on at the next table (Listen DC 11). One of the men gets up and approaches the characters table. He is short and red faced with the look of a regular drinker. He smiles heartily and asks to sit down and informs you his name is Sorano. What he is really doing is recruiting rough looking fellows of a dubious nature to 'take the Stone back for the High Lords' what he says,

'--many of the good men around here have been laid off due to some Lord or other buying all the barges and wagons he can. It looks like he will be leaving with everything he owns rather than staying on under the rule of a madman. He won't be the last either, why do you think the merchants sold up eh? Because they are getting out too. No Lords and no merchants means death for a City. What I am doing is getting good, true men under the High lords banner so that we can take the Stone back, how does that sound?'

For characters with an ear for language there is a possibility that they can discern that Sorano is not from Tear, he is laying the accent on thick but he is not a native (DC 15/DC 12 if the character is from Tear). It is impossible to guess what his true accent is though. In reality Sorano is a gleeman working for Lord Estolan to hire the local scum to aid in his attack on the Stone in a weeks time.

There is a good chance of a non-lethal brawl if the characters are totally against this jovial fellow. He will make a scene and try to get the bargemen and teamsters at the next table to start a fight while he makes his escape. Don't worry the characters will get a chance to get their own back later on.

Sorano is a vindictive man and will meet up with a hand of Trollocs outside of town and set them on the trail of the players. The next time the players try to make camp they will be set upon by this group. Give the players a listen check (DC 10) not to be caught flat footed. They may or not link it to Sorano, what they decide the reason a group of Trollocs would attack them out of the blue so far from the Blight is up to them.

The players should make it to Tear without too much fuss, feel free to add a few random encounters on the road or river journey whichever your players decide is the best way to travel.
The smell of fish and smoke fill the common room. Working men smoke tabac in small groups, drinking warm beer and discussing the change of rule in the Stone of Tear. All the windows are open to combat the damp heat that permeates the city. Sweat marks on the backs of those present show the futility of the attempt. A tall sweaty man smiles invitingly at the players from behind the bar as his eyes measure their worth.

The landlord remembers the merchant and that he booked one of his excellent rooms for a week but then went out one night with his two guards and never came back. He reported it to the constables who took his possessions away but has heard nothing else and had “--quite forgot about it until you asked, what with all the fuss going on at the Stone.” If questioned about Vermis the landlord replies “--that other fella was lookin' for a Vermis too but I will tell you same as I told him, never heard of nobody with that name, merchant or otherwise. That doesn't mean he isn't here but if he is -- he is not the sort of merchant you want to be doing business with mark my words. You might have more luck asking down at the docks for that sort of merchant.”

The landlord believes Vermis to be a smuggler. In fact Vermis is an alias used by Lord Estolan, if anyone starts asking questions about a merchant named Vermis then eventually a visit from a DF welcoming committee will be in order.

Rumours discovered while searching for Vermis in the various Inns and Taverns:-

Gather information DC10:(DC +2 if the player is not from Tear)
1. The Lord Dragon has made all equal under the law. He has even threatened to hang Lords. (true)
2. He is a rabid dog under the control of the white tower. (possible)
3. A number of barge crews have been laid off. (true)
4. Lord Estolan is giving an outrageous price for wolf hides upriver. (true)
5. Up river a few farms were burned out by pillagers/whitecloaks. or in a tit for tat house war. (false)
6. Some of the forests up river have been infested with wolves and bears. (partly true wolves have been drawn to the Fades)

After a few days asking for Vermis on leaving an Inn the characters will be set upon by (no. of PC's + 3) warriors led by Sorano. They are not out to rob they are out to kill (beef this up if PC's are real hard looking). Rather than have the PC's take Sorano prisoner have a group of constables turn up and arrest them all. Sorano will weave a good story about honest Tear folk being attacked by foreigners. The constables will arrest everyone and let a magistrate sort it out in the morning. During the night Sorano will be torn limb from limb in his cell, the characters will be awoken by his blood curdling screams,

'as the screaming abruptly stops you wait, locked in and weaponless. A single torch outside the cell door is the only light. Someone walks past your cell door and its face is partly revealed. A cold dread sits in the pit of your stomach as you see an eyeless face framed in the small window of the cell door. It looks at you momentarily then moves on.'
(I saw this as sitting in a college dormitory, hearing a blood curdling scream and having Hannibal Lectar walk by your open door and smile at you.)

If a player runs to the door they can see the Fade walk into and be swallowed by the deepest shadows, when the guards arrive a minute or so later the cloaked figure is gone and whimpering can be heard from some of the other cells. When the jailers arrive with lanterns the players can see a thick crimson liquid pooling under Sorano's cell door. The players will be questioned by Moraine Sedai as to what happened and what they saw. Depending on your game she may remember the players and have them released immediately otherwise this is an opportunity for them to meet a few of the main book characters during their questioning.

Curiouser and curiouser.

Searching for Sorano's house will eventually lead to a small apartment deep within the Maule (really muddy and disgusting underfoot requiring the use of clogs or bare feet). There are always individuals around but they appear to pay no interest to the players as they enter Sorano's two room apartment. It is a dank dusty place, filth from a dozen half eaten meals lies in a corner of the main room. It is hard to say whether the room has been trashed or it has always been this way, it is difficult to move without kicking an empty bottle. After searching for a few hours in the apartment (Search DC14, +1/hour searching bonus), hidden behind a false brick in the fireplace, the players find wrapped in a stained silken veil an Aes Sedai ring, a small glass disk, flat on the bottom and curved on top with a single thumb indentation on the edge it is 3 inches in diameter and 1 inch tall at its highest point and several small Ogier made objects. If a player presses his thumb to the indentation he will see and hear a six inch representation of a young Sorano singing a song in High Chant appear in the disk. It is mesmerising, as a young man Sorano was quite handsome and very talented. The players may notice that the recording also shows a large tapestry with a crest upon it behind Sorano as he moves about the hall. The players can discover this is the crest of the Estolan family (Local Knowledge DC10) or by speaking with another Lord/Lady and describing the crest (gather information DC15). It will not be possible for the players to show the glass disk working to a Tearien without causing alarm. A channeler can use the disk to record a new image by channeling spirit into it while their thumb is on the indent and looking at the item to be recorded. The Veil is of good quality green silk and the stain appears to be reddish in colour and in the shape of a mouth. Anyone with knowledge of Tanchico will recognise this as being from that part of the world. Note that a channeler must have recorded this image initially.

On returning to their Inn the landlord greets them with a warm smile (it doesn't make good business if patrons disappear) and hands them a sealed envelope. The letter was delivered by a 'plain unremarkable woman, seamstress by the look of her I would say my Lord'

Lord Estolan is the one you seek. -- A Friend
This letter is sent by an agent of a forsaken who is against the attack on Rand. He/she hopes to stop the attack without having to openly oppose it. The characters now have some contacts within the Stone from whom they can discover what they can about this Lord Estolan.

This is an opportunity for characters to mingle with the aristocracy, play some cards/dice and let the wanderers and nobles in the party get to use their skills. They should also get to see Matt have a run in with a set of playing cards. It may require a few favours to be called in or a little 'problem' of a delicate nature sorted to get the more important information (a lady was almost caught in a precarious situation with another woman's husband, unfortunately in her haste she left her glove behind, this bears her family's moniker. If only a friend could recover it -- she would be more inclined to help a friend than a stranger). If your players are not geared for this then have the agent spoon feed them some incriminating evidence and move to the journey to the keep. If you wish to have the players attend an evening entertainment so that they can meet with Lords and Ladies have the note arrive with an invitation for each of your players.

Some interesting characters to talk to.
House Seneschal - I based him on B5's Londo
Warship Captain - Voyagers Chekotay
Smuggler Captain - Han Solo

Information:

-Diplomacy or Gather Information
DC5:
1. Lord Estolan is the only living member of his immediate family. (true)
2. He is one of the most brutal of the Lords ruling with an iron hand. (debatable)
3. He is in conflict with another lord and a few deaths have resulted. (false - spread by Sorano)

DC10:
4. He has a new bodyguard and he is a blademaster. (true)
5. He has been seen in the company of the Dragon. (false this is actually Caleb)
6. He bought a number of barges and sent them upriver. (true)

DC15:
7. He is about to upsticks and move rather than live under the new rule. (false -- excuse for buying wagons and barges)
8. The new bodyguard has been seen in some unsavoury places. (true)
9. He is a poor business man but has plenty of money. (false -- he is an average business man, with plenty of money)

DC20:
10. He is selling stuff, power made stuff. (true -- Diplomacy only. This rumour can only be discovered from an aristocrat)
11. He has some warehouses which he has heavily guarded recently. (true -- +2 bonus for players with underworld contacts)
12. An old servant says the Lords keep is haunted, ghostly figures etc. (true -- these were visits by Fades)
If the players visit the Chalm to inspect the warehouse they will find it heavily guarded. There is a very difficult climb up a neighbouring warehouse (Climb DC20) followed by a running jump (DC15) to Lord Estolan's warehouse. After a few sneak and hide opposed rolls with the guardsmen the successful player should be rewarded with discovering boxes of spears and crudely made axes, swords and helmets but the warehouse is 3/4 empty. These are the supplies for the human contingent of the attacking force. If the player is discovered have him chased by a few guardsmen but let him escape by the skin of his teeth (hiding in a large pile of fish entrails would suffice).

To The Keep - optional

As the characters make their way towards the keep of Lord Estolan they will come across many farms and outbuildings burned to the ground. Caleb was ordered to kill all the local farmers and burn down the farms near the waygate, Lord Estolan decided there was too much risk of discovery by a farmer with so many Trollocs around. It also meant their livestock could be used to feed the Trollocs while they waited. If a channeler is in the party and he/she has the Sense Residue feat he will be able to discern a weave on a successful weavesight check DC 25 (DC35 for male to learn the weave if he has Air or Fire affinity, DC40 if not).

As the players make camp for the night in one of the burned out farm buildings they are discovered by a patrol of 100 Trollocs. In the middle of this hopeless battle wolves rush from the forest edge and engage the Trollocs. Within minutes the farm is mayhem with Trollocs and Wolves fighting to the death. Any Wolfbrother players should make a will check DC 20 or be drawn into the melee. Eventually the players and wolves are victorious and the wolves withdraw to the forest. A wolfbrother will be able to communicate with the wolves and learn the location of a large group of Trollocs.

The Keep

From a vantage point some 600m to the west of the keep the players can get a fairly good view of the surrounding area. This is an opulent two story building with extensive gardens as becomes a wealthy Lord. a mile or so to the rear can be found a ranch with a number of horses and stabling facilities. It is here that the players can see a hastily built pier with several barges moored to it. The piers are built over reed beds that grow out some 15ft from the edge of the river. If the characters approach they will find a number of Trolloc tracks leading from the woodland behind them towards the pier. If the players approach the edge of the forest a feeling of well being floods over them and any channeler will no longer be capable of sensing the source. Any Ogier players will sense a stedding. Every 30 mins or so a hundred Trollocs will appear and make their way to the pier at the ranch and enter one of the barges. The crew will pull the tarpaulin over the hold once again.

As the players are watching two of the barges will cast off and head downriver. Two small figures in hooded cloaks make their way to a small boat moored at the end of the furthest away pier. The boatman offers his hand to both of these figures as they enter the boat and then casts off and follows the barges.
downriver (if the players are following a clue from Tanchico then these are the Black Ajah they are following).

Orchestrating all of this is a large goat faced Trolloc. It stands a head taller than the others and has large black scimitar shaped horns, it is directing the Trollocs with a heavy, spiked axe. All the Trollocs defer to it and it stands as an equal beside the few Fades who are around. Only an old man with a tall youth at his side seem to cause the creature to lose its demeanour of superiority.

There is no way for a normal party to deal with a hundred Trollocs so an alternative method must be sought. The most likely is to sabotage the barges that are left so that they sink on the way downriver. This will require a number of opposed sneak and simple swim rolls followed by a disable device DC15 that will take roughly 5 rounds a barge (if a player has seafaring knowledge give them a synergy bonus of +2 and reduce the time on each barge to 3 rounds on a successful check against DC10). No matter how many the players manage to scupper eight barges will make it to the Stone to take part in the attack.

Return to Tear

"As you ride into Tear your horse stumbles in some deep wheel ruts cut into the soft ground. The streets are eerily quiet as you make your way towards the Stone. A convoy of wagons is proceeding through the main gate. As you approach the last wagon a musky odour catches in your throat. Two spearmen move to bar your way into the Stone."

Both these guardsmen are in on the attack, no one could miss the smell of 30 wagons filled with Trollocs. If the players try to warn them of their suspicions as to the contents of the wagons then the guards will attack. All the Trollocs from the last wagon will emerge and also attack the players. Meanwhile the wagons will make their way deeper in to the fortress. One of the teamsters will realise that the game is up and the covers will be torn from the wagons releasing the contents. From the other side of the gate the players will see the horde charge towards the Stone attacking any who get in their way. If the players are doing well have a group of disgruntled bargemen appear behind them and join in the attack.

Eventually the players should fight their way free and make their way into the fortress, they should run into Lan and Moiraine at some point just as Lan receives a heavy blow from the large goat faced Trolloc with scimitar shaped horns that the players recognise from back at the Keep. For a moment down a side corridor they glimpse a large red haired youth carrying a flaming sword before a group of Trolloc force him out of sight. With her help they manage to rescue Lan and clear the chamber. They then are taken in tow by Moiraine and they charge through the fortress fighting Trollocs and the occasional fade that Lan can't kill immediately (show the effect on Trollocs when the joined Fade dies).

As Lan and Moiraine deal with a Fade in the junction of two corridors the players see a group of Aeil maidens trapped in a large chamber and fighting for their lives against a Fade and some joined Trollocs. One of them is badly injured and can barely stand while the others use all their
skill to keep the Fade and Trollocs at bay. If the players do not immediately decide to aid the Aeil then Moiraine orders them to do so. In the middle of battle with the Trollocs and Fade one of the players will catch a glimpse of the two hooded figures making their way along a corridor several floors below. They have a group of Trollocs in tow and they appear to be carrying a number of large objects in their arms. After the players kill the Fade all the other Trollocs fall to the ground screaming in agony. By this time the corridor below is empty and the two figures are nowhere to be seen. The Aeil quickly gather their injured and depart, a white haired maiden looks long and hard at the players, nods an acknowledgement and throws the dagger from her own belt to the player who dealt the killing blow.

'--keep it as a token of my debt to you wetlander. Should you need aid from a maiden show them that dagger and they will not refuse you.'

By this time the players should be in a fairly rough state and Moiraine will order them to lie low stay out of danger. If the players mention the cloaked figures she will look torn between a course of action before telling them 'I have other work this night, we will talk of this later'. Eventually the sounds of battle will die down and they will be discovered by a patrol of guardsmen. They are very suspicious and take them under guard to a yard set aside for captives. Before they are put in with a bunch of prisoners they are recognised by a Lieutenant who promptly has their weapons returned and leads them to Moiraine's chambers. He assumed that the players where part of her group as he had seen them fighting together. She is too exhausted to heal them but has a local wisdom brew them a potion and deal with their wounds. The potion makes the players drowsy and they are soon fast asleep.

**Return to Estolan Keep**

Moiraine sends the players back to the Estolan Keep to find out who or what has been left. As they approach they see thick black smoke coming from the location of their objective. The keep and stables have been set aflame and the piers destroyed. They catch up to Lord Estolan and Caleb in the Stedding on their way to the Waygate with two Trollocs in tow. Lord Estolan makes a run for it while the Trollocs and Caleb make ready to fight (remember Caleb has a death wish). After the fight with Caleb the players will arrive at the mine just in time to see Lord Estolan striking a support beam with a sledgehammer and collapsing the tunnel entrance.

On returning to the stone they are taken for an audience with Moiraine:

During the attack one of the great stores deep within the stone was broken into and a number of items taken. These have not been identified as yet. After speaking with Moiraine it is fairly clear that the players have been almost solely responsible for causing the attack to fail. If it were not for their quick thinking in disabling so many of the barges the attack would have been a complete success. She might suggest going to Tar Valon to train as warders. Lan too recognises that the players actions saved his life and when they pass him to leave he blocks their path.

'--you did well yesterday. I am in your
debt. Consider her words carefully before you make a decision.' With that he steps aside and moves to stand next to Moirainne.

**Aftermath**

Moiraine has some new contacts that she can use with no connection to the White Tower. They can also train at Tar Valon if they so wish. The Aiel Maidens and Lan have also acknowledged a debt to them.

One of the Forsaken has used them in their scheme to interrupt the plans of another Forsaken. Good help is hard to find so they can expect to be involved in another one of his/her plans some time in the future.

The black Ajah have managed to steal a number of items from the age of legends.

**Characters**

**Lord Estolan** --based on Ian Richardson in "House of Cards"

Lord Estolan is a 50+ lord of the old school. He treats his peasants with harsh cruelty which until the arrival of Rand Al'Thor he did with impunity. At an early age Sylvester Estolan showed signs of his cruel nature but his parents did nothing to temper this as long as it was the local peasantry. Later on in his teenage years he was introduced to carnal pleasures and torture by a DF. Within only a few years he was a full DF himself. Both parents and a younger sibling met with unfortunate accidents that Sylvester himself could not have been responsible for and he was now head of the estate. The main reason that the DF removed Estolan's parents was the discovery of a lost stedding on his land that brought about the demise of his kin. Recently with the Trollocs exploration of the Ways a Waygate has been discovered on his land. Deep within the cave that the Waygate had remained hidden in for years was an Ogier crafted building. Over the past year Estolan has been excavating this discovery and a few Terangrael and a couple of angrael have been discovered along with many Ogier crafted items. This appears to have been a prison where the Ogier kept their charges until such time as a decision was made as to their guilt and also where they could be bound by an oath rod and perhaps in the Trolloc Wars as a safe house from channelers (in my game this is where the forsaken got an oath rod). This discovery has brought Estolan a visit from Rhavin who has ordered Estolan to keep this secret from the other Chosen, the recent discovery of a small statuette of an owl on a tree stump (+2 Angreal) and an Oath Rod has gained Estolan a bodyguard. Wherever Estolan goes he is followed by a very tall, muscled red haired individual. To Estolan's annoyance has ordered Estolan to organise an attack on the stone within a week. Lord Estolan is a careful man and realises that the attack has only a small chance of success and there is no time to hide his involvement either. Lord Estolan has come up with a plan. He will do nothing to hide his involvement in organising the attack. Caleb is ordered to kill all the local farmers and burn down the farms near the waygate. Serano will spread a rumour that this is the work of another Lord due to a disagreement. On the evening of the attack he will make his
way with Caleb into the ways intending to come out in Tar Valon. He will kill all the miners and seal the mine in passing. During his journey he will instruct Caleb to use compulsion on him (to say he has only one leg if asked how many legs he has for instance). He will then emerge in Tar Valon with an interesting story.

Caleb --'Edge' from WWE

Caleb was an Aiel of the Stone Dog sept who discovered he could channel, as was custom he set off into the blight to spit in sightblinders eye. For many years he managed to use a mixture of channeling and his excellent combat skills to kill hundreds of Trollocs and a few Fades. Unfortunately he was eventually captured by a couple of Chosen and taken to Shyul Ghul. There he was tortured and against his will bound to the Dark One. Since his capture Caleb has taken up the sword and has recently earned the right to carry a Heron marked blade, he is still struggling against his conditioning but it is a losing battle, this is why he will not use an Aiel spear as he sees himself as a coward for not taking his own life and will not dishonour his sept any more than he has to. As you will have noted from the basic description of Caleb his physical build is similar to Rand although facially they bear no real resemblance. His superiors have also noted this and plan on using this to discredit Rand at some point in the future.

Sorano -- Aubrey from 'Firefox'

55 year old Gleeman who is used by Estolan to perform various roles that require a softer touch. He has been a Darkfriend for over 30 years and has done too many evil deeds to mention. His training as a Gleeman has gained him access to the rich and powerful or the dregs of society when needs be. He has now come to the end of his useful life as an agent for Estolan. His heavy drinking has ruined his singing voice and his appearance. He still has uses dealing with the lowest rungs of society but Estolan considers him to be totally expendable. Sorano suspects this and will quite happily 'see the light' if things go bad. The Fade sent by Estolan will ensure this will not happen.

Trolloc
Large Shadowspawn
HP 16, Init +1, Spd 30ft, Def 14, Attack: Scythsword +4 melee, Dmg 2D4+3, Saves: Fort +4 Ref +3 Will +1 Feats: Alertness, Light Sensitive (-2 in bright light) Skills: Climb +2, Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +3

Notes:
These large creatures have reach.

Goat Trolloc Champion:
CR 4; large-size shadowspawn; HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init +1; Spd 40 ft; AC 16 (-1 size, +1 dex, +3 natural, +4 mail shirt); Atk + 7 melee (battleaxe 1d8 + 4 /x3), +4 ranged; SQ charge, light sensitive, lowlight vision, Myrddraal Link, Reach; SV Fort +6, Refl +2, Will +0; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 7 Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Hide +3, Intimidate +8, Jump +4, Move Silently +3, Spot +4; Alertness, Power Attack. Charge (Ex): When charging a goat Trolloc performs a gore attack doing 4d6+4 damage.

Myrddraal
Medium Sized Shadowspawn