

Fin liked overhangs best, where the deeper currents moving more swiftly around Tweed's many loops and bends had worn away the red sandstone, creating natural cover from sun and predators for exhausted salmon fighting their way upstream to the spawning grounds. Fin liked overhangs because of the shade they offered on days like this, the sun scorching down through the water, blinding. Also, down here in the relative dark Fin could see better, lie back and watch the infrequent boats drift by overhead, marvel at the grotesquely contorted images they cast.

Days like this with the sun reflecting sharply off the water, fishermen could see very little below the surface. Which meant Fin could use the cover of the overhangs to stalk them unseen, wait downstream until their lines drifted down, then dart out like a pike and snip, one more trophy for the Wall of Flies.

That was the hard part, regulating breath for the strike, timing it right so the bubbles didn't leave a warning trail on the surface. Best sport of course was when Fin actually witnessed a strike, saw the salmon take the fly. Easiest were the men in waders, stuck out there midstream, only thing they can do is let the fish run, try and make the bank for a surefooted race. Then Fin could either kick in with the fins and follow the chase downstream, or be really boring and remain doggo, ready for a bushwack.

This afternoon, though, Fin wasn't too hopeful. The boat up there hugging the bank, not much action, just the one trailing line, the rod hanging motionless over the stern. Maybe the man had fallen asleep, Fin thought, all that hard work casting his line. Either way Fin was not impressed: fishermen who could tie their own flies wouldn't be out on a day like this unless all they wanted to return with was a heavy case of sunburn. Maybe later, if the cloud came in against all the forecasters' predictions, or at dusk when sky and insects hang low over the water, maybe then you could lure a returning grilse to the fly, trigger a parr-deep feeding

impulse and trick it into taking the right fly. But now, at this time? Not a chance. The guy had to be a novice or was dangling his dick in the water.

Breathing shallow, Fin tried to interpret the markings of the dinghy, noting how it sat in the water—not that low, just the novice and his ghillie; and Lord knows he needed a ghillie—every now and then an oar dipping in to keep the craft steady. Maybe one of the hotel boats from Dryburgh or Craikmuir; the ghillie, then, most likely to be Tom Simpson. Which made for some fun.

Leaving Ravenswood behind, drifting a little faster now round Old Melrose where the river loops beneath Scott's View up there on Bemersyde Hill. Getting a little tricky, Fin having to drop back and use the shadows of the overhang more as Tweed cut through the gorge, the old woodland trees crowding the banks, extending out over the water, enough shade here for a novice to look over the side of a boat and see right down to the riverbed. Catch some movement from the corner of his eye and spot Fin lying doggo under the shelf. Draw his ghillie's attention and ask if that was common round these here parts, whackos all dressed up in scuba gear, pretending they was fish...

No. Without the rebreather, it was better to be cautious. Go deep and cut across to the far bank where the current would hide the bubbles, wait and see if they were going to fish the Cromwel or come round the loop and try their luck in The Corbie; failing that, The Dish.

Fin checked the situation overhead—saw the dinghy rocking from movement on board, and knew the ghillie and his man would be watching where they put their feet and not looking down in the water—then kicked for the cool weeded dark of the riverbed. The faster current there like a slingshot propelling Fin round the loop to another deep overhang on the far bank. The chase now on, the game afoot.