StrikeMan Holds the Line



A Live AI by Genoch story

Walls Go Up



The ground shook. Then it shook again.

StrikeMan felt it through his boots. He knew that shake. Towerstone was close.

Big slabs of stone pushed up from the street. They rose fast, right in front of the bank. Towerstone stood at the far end of the block, arms out, eyes locked on the walls. The walls had to go up. That was his plan. Go high enough, and no one could stop the robbery.

"Not today," StrikeMan said.

He had to go now. Every second the walls went up, they got harder to stop. He broke into a run. His boots hit the ground hard. Go, go, go — that was the only thought in his head.

The walls creaked. Stone dust filled the air.

StrikeMan did not slow down. He had to go fast, or the walls would be too high. He ran straight at them.

Throw It Back



StrikeMan slammed his hands into the stone wall. He felt it right away — a deep pulse, like a drum beat, moving up through his silver gauntlets.

That was her power. Towerstone's power. And it was sitting right there in his hands.

He looked at the wall. He looked at Towerstone. Then he smiled.

He could throw it. He could throw her own power right back at her.

StrikeMan pulled his arm back. He felt the pulse grow hot in his gauntlets. He let it build. Then he let it go.

The throw was fast. The throw was hard. It hit the walls like a wave. Stone cracked. Slabs split apart and fell to the ground.

Towerstone took a step back.

StrikeMan lined up for one more throw. He pulled back. He let it go. The last wall split down the middle and crashed to the street.

He could throw her power back. That was the key.

Hold On



Towerstone hit back hard.

New stone slabs burst up from the street. They came fast. They came from all sides. StrikeMan had to hold his ground or get buried.

He planted his feet and pressed his hands flat against the nearest slab. The pulse hit his gauntlets like a hammer. He felt it try to push him back. He did not move.

Hold on, he told himself. Just hold on.

He pulled the power in. His gauntlets burned with it. He could feel Towerstone pouring everything she had into the stone. She was not going to stop. So he had to hold. He had to hold until she had nothing left.

The pulse got weaker. Then weaker still.

Towerstone's arms dropped. Her knees bent. She let out a long breath and went down to the street.

StrikeMan let go of the slab. He stood up straight. He had been able to hold — and that was enough.

Hot Dogs and Big Ideas



Pete had not moved. Not one step.

His hot dog cart sat right where it always did, stone dust and all. He held out a hot dog like nothing had happened.

"You did not run," StrikeMan said.

"Nope," said Pete. "I stay. You grow from the hard days, not the easy ones."

StrikeMan took the hot dog. He looked back at the cracked street, the split stone, the bank doors still locked tight.

"You think one fight can grow into something big?" he asked.

Pete shrugged. "Small acts grow. That is how it works. You hold your ground, you throw your best, you go back out there — and it starts to grow. One brave thing leads to the next."

StrikeMan bit into the hot dog. It was good.

"Come back when things grow rough again," Pete said. "I will be here."

"I know you will," StrikeMan said.

He smiled under his mask and let the city grow quiet around him.