StrikeMan Ride Hide Climb Find



A Live AI by Genoch story

The Bridge Battle



StrikeMan hit Phantom hard, and the fight was over.

Phantom had tried to ride the wind and get away, but StrikeMan would not let him. He cut off every turn. He blocked every move. Phantom could ride fast, but StrikeMan could ride faster.

The last big blast sent Phantom off the bridge and into the river below.

But the shock wave from that blast was huge. It spun across the bridge like a top and hit a small cart full of pretzels. The cart tipped, flipped, and went over. Hot pretzels flew in all the ways.

StrikeMan landed on the bridge with a soft thud. He looked at the mess. He looked at the old man who had been behind the cart.

The old man just blinked.

StrikeMan pulled off one silver gauntlet and bent down. "Let me help," he said.

He could ride into the sky any time. Right now, the bridge needed him more.

The Old Man and the Pretzels



Pretzels were all over the bridge. Some had rolled to the left. Some had rolled to the right. A few had gone far, as if they did not want to be found.

The old man did not yell. He did not cry. He just got down on one knee and began to pick them up, one by one.

StrikeMan got down beside him. "Where do they hide?" StrikeMan asked, looking under the cart.

"They always hide," the old man said with a small smile. "That is what pretzels do."

StrikeMan reached under the railing and pulled one out. Then he found two more near the far curb. They had tried to hide, but he was good at this.

"You are not scared of me," StrikeMan said.

The old man looked up. "Should I be?"

"Most people are."

The old man shrugged. "You are down here picking up my pretzels. Bad men do not do that."

StrikeMan almost smiled behind his mask.

How StrikeMan Works



"How do you do it?" the old man asked. "How do you know where to look?"

StrikeMan set down a pretzel. "I climb," he said. "That is step one. I climb as high as I can — up to the tops of towers, up to the tops of tall bridges like this one."

The old man looked up at the top of the bridge. It was very high.

"When you climb that high," StrikeMan said, "you can see all the ways down. You can see every roof. Every corner. Every spot where something might be wrong."

"And if something is wrong?" the old man asked.

"Then I climb faster," StrikeMan said. "I get above it. I look hard at it. Most bad things do not want to be seen from above."

The old man nodded slow. "So you climb to see what others miss."

"Yes," StrikeMan said. "Every time."

The old man was quiet for a moment. Then he said, "That is smart."

StrikeMan picked up the last pretzel. "It helps."

A Pretzel and a Promise



The old man held out a pretzel. "Take one," he said. "You helped me find them all."

StrikeMan took it. He did not eat it, but he held it like it meant something.

"Will you find him?" the old man asked. "The one who ran?"

"I will find him," StrikeMan said. "I always find the ones who think they can get away."

The old man nodded. "And the next one after him?"

"I will find that one too," StrikeMan said. "That is what I do. I find them. Every time."

The old man smiled. It was a slow, warm smile — the kind that did not need many words.

StrikeMan handed the pretzel back. "Keep it," he said. "You worked hard for it."

The old man laughed. It was a good laugh.

Then StrikeMan rose up into the sky, and the bridge grew small below him.

The old man watched him go. Then he picked up his cart and got back to work.