

Gale-Force #5 - "Seeing Red"

Written by Steven Bland

In her own magical realm, a witch named Melinda brooded and plotted. Melinda had dark hair and wore a dark purple dress with a corset.

It's not fair. *I* was destined to rule the Quadling Country and to become the Royal Sorceress of Oz! *I* should have been given the crown, which was *rightfully mine!* But, my twin sister, Glinda stole it from me, she thought. I vowed *one day* that I would have my revenge on her and *I will!*

Melinda looked at her crystal screen and saw images of Gale-Force thwarting supervillains and monsters and saving lives.

Glinda empowered this girl, who calls herself Gale-Force, to be her champion, Melinda thought.

Melinda then looked at a pair of vambraces which each held three rubies. All of the rubies were each a different color. The left vambrace had a brownish red ruby, a pink-red ruby, and a dark red ruby. The right vambrace had a bright red ruby, a pink ruby, and a purplish red ruby.

Perhaps I need a champion of my own, the witch thought. To help me deal with Glinda, and with Gale-Force herself.

"YES," Melinda exclaimed. "A *SEEKING SPELL* WILL FIND THE *PERFECT* CHAMPION FOR ME!"

Wasting no time, Melinda cast her seeking spell.

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That morning, Almira Hamel, a 21-year-old woman entered a Starbucks in Kansas City, Missouri, treating all of the other customers like they were beneath her. Almira had black shoulder-length hair and wore a gray skirt, a black blouse, a gray blazer and red flat dress shoes.

Meanwhile, outside, a ball had been dropped. Soon, it started bouncing.

"TRIPLE MOCHA LATTE," Almira demanded. "NOW!"

The barista started fixing her latte. Almira waited impatiently.

Outside, the ball kept bouncing and steadily started gaining more and more momentum. Soon, it was hitting everything in sight and all of the citizens on the street were soon ducking for cover

The barista finished making the latte and gave it to Almira, who took a sip.

"THIS LATTE IS *TERRIBLE*, *UTTERLY TERRIBLE*," Almira angrily told the barista. "DO IT OVER *AGAIN*!"

"B-B-But - -," the stuttering barista protested.

"*NOW*," Almira loudly demanded.

Soon, the establishment's manager showed up.

"Now, look here, Ms. Hamel," the manager told Almira. "You may be the CEO of your own media industry, but we don't work for you! And you can't push us around!"

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"THEN, I WILL *BUY* THIS ESTABLISHMENT AND *FIRE* YOU," Almira angrily told the manager.

Melinda's seeking spell found Almira. From her realm, Melinda examined the young woman and was very pleased.

Yes, she will make a *fine* champion for me, the evil witch thought.

Back at the Starbucks in Kansas City, the ball from outside smashed through the window inside. Both the barista and Almira ducked, the barista behind the counter, and Almira on the floor. The ball bounded off the wall that was to Almira's right and hurtled straight toward her.

Gale-Force arrived in the nick of time and, using the Lion's enhanced strength, speed, and agility, caught the ball in mid-air and gently set it aside.

The superheroine went to Almira to help her up.

"GET YOUR HANDS *OFF* OF ME," Almira angrily said as she shoved Gale-Force away.

"HEY, I JUST SAVED YOUR LIFE," Gale-Force snapped. "IF IT WASN'T FOR ME, YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN CREAMED BY THAT BALL!"

The barista came out from behind his counter.

"Thank you, Gale-Force," the grateful barista said.

"All part of the job," the superheroine told him. "Now if you'll excuse me."

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Gale-Force quickly exited through the window.

Almira received a call on her smartphone. The ringtone was "Miss Gulch's Theme" from the 1939 "Wizard of Oz" movie.

Before she could answer the phone, a dark purple bubble appeared and headed towards her. Engulfing Almira, the bubble flew off with her.

Once she was outside, Gale-Force challenged the person responsible for the damage to the Starbucks and the areas around it, a costumed villain calling himself the Terrible Toymeister, who was wearing a striped harlequin outfit and a mask with goggles.

"It's over, Toymeister," the superheroine told him. "Give up now and save yourself a world of hurt."

"The only one who's gonna be hurt, Gale-Force - -," the costumed villain said as he sent out a cybernetic summons. "- - IS YOU!"

A bunch of toy robots came.

With another cybernetic command from the Terrible Toymeister, the toy robots combined and transformed into a powerful human-sized robot ready for battle.

The costumed villain cybernetically commanded the human-sized robot to attack the superheroine with a rocket-powered punch.

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Using Locasta Tattypoo's Teleport Dash, Gale-Force managed to duck the punch. Then, using the Tin Woodsman's Tin Mimicry, Gale-Force grabbed the robot and delivered a suplex to it. Resuming her original form, Gale-Force then used the Lion's strength, speed, and agility to move quickly toward the Terrible Toymeister, seize his hat and goggles, and knock him unconscious.

Well, that's that, the superheroine thought. Now I'd better get to school before the first bell rings.

Thinking of her destination, Gale-Force clicked the heels of her silver boots three times. In an instant, she was gone.

Shortly, two police officers arrived on the scene and found the Terrible Toymeister.

"Well, well, if it isn't Tyrone Tweedle, the so-called Terrible Toymeister," one of the police officers said.

"You have the right to remain silent," the other police officer said as his partner cuffed the costumed villain.

Elsewhere, at North Kansas City High School, Gale-Force appeared in a secluded area near the building.

Focusing on her desire to resume her civilian identity, the superheroine clicked her heels once.

"WHOOSH!" A magic cyclone rose up around her and she was transformed into Dorothy Donaldson, who was soon making a mad dash for the school's entrance.

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Meanwhile, the dark bubble transported Almira to Melinda's realm and came face to face with Melinda herself.

"Hello, Almira Hamel," Melinda told her.

"Who are you?" Almira asked.

"I am Melinda, your benefactor," Melinda answered.

"Benefactor?" Almira asked.

"Yes," Melinda answered. "I can give you incredible *power*! Power to literally crush those beneath you!"

"What do I have to do?" Almira asked.

Melinda then showed the vambraces to Almira.

"All you have to do is put on these magic ruby vambraces," the witch said.

Almira took the vambraces and put them on. She soon became charged with fantastic energy, and was transformed into an amazon with long black hair with bright-red streaks and clad in a black leather ensemble with vest, pants, and boots.

She marveled at herself.

"*Amazing*," she said. "I sense that I now have incredible powers."

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"You do," Melinda told the transformed Almira. "The brownish-red ruby enhances your strength, speed, durability, reflexes, and agility to superhuman levels; the pink-red ruby grants you a teleport dash; and the pink ruby grants you the power of clairvoyance."

"The bright red ruby gives you the power to manipulate fire for various effects," Melinda added.

The transformed Almira practiced her fire manipulation abilities by creating fire-based constructs.

"The purplish-red ruby enables you to sheath herself in an exoskeleton of purple energy. Try it," Melinda said.

Almira did as Melinda told her.

"Amazing," Almira said. "This exoskeleton actually increases the superhuman ability that the brownish-red ruby gives me."

"And the dark red ruby simply clears and improves your mind," Melinda said.

It actually overrides your brain's inhibition center, making you susceptible to my suggestions, or, left to your own volition, act in a highly uninhibited, selfish, or immoral manner, the witch thought.

"And now, Almira, I ask that you do something for me," Melinda said.

"What is that?" The transformed Almira asked.

"I want you to eliminate two powerful enemies of mine: Glinda and her champion, Gale-Force," Melinda answered.

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"Consider it done, Melinda," the transformed Almira said. "But, I'm not Almira Hamel anymore!"

"NOW, I AM - -," the transformed Almira added. "- - *RUBY RAGE!*"

"To get to any destination you wish in an instant," Melinda told Ruby Rage. "You have but to focus on that destination and slam your ruby vambraces together."

Focusing on Glinda's Realm, Ruby Rage slammed her ruby vambraces together.

Instantly, she arrived at her destination and soon confronted Glinda herself.

"WHO ARE YOU?! WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?" Glinda asked.

"THE NAME'S RUBY RAGE, GLINDA," Ruby Rage answered.

"AND I MEAN TO DESTROY YOU," she added as she shot bolts of fire at Glinda, who repelled them with bubble shields.

Ruby Rage was able to use her fire to cut through the shields. With a teleport dash, she was able to incapacitate Glinda and render her unconscious.

"UNNNHHH," Glinda moaned.

Draping Glinda over her right shoulder, Ruby Rage focused on Melinda's realm and slammed her ruby vambraces together.

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Later, Glinda regained consciousness and soon found herself shackled to a wall in a dungeon in Melinda's realm, facing Melinda, herself, and Ruby Rage.

"Well done, Ruby Rage," Melinda told her charge.

Melinda then turned her attention to her captive.

"Don't bother struggling, Glinda," Melinda told her. "Your shackles are made of a special metal which neutralize your magic."

"And now, Ruby Rage will find your so-called champion," Melinda said.

Ruby Rage used her power of clairvoyance to search for Gale-Force. Melinda's evil champion detected her quarry in the form of Dorothy Donaldson at North Kansas City high school

"Gale-Force must be in her civilian identity," Ruby Rage said. "I'll make her come to me!"

"And I know just how - - and where - - to do it," Ruby Rage said with a sinister smile before banging her vambraces together while focusing on her intended destination: downtown Kansas City.

Soon, Glinda was approached by Melinda.

"Soon, Glinda," Melinda said. "My champion will find yours and defeat her."

"Don't bet on it," Glinda said. "Gale-Force has gone up against impossible odds before - - and triumphed!"

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"Not this time, dear Glinda," Melinda gloated. "*This time*, Gale-Force has truly met her match, Once she has been defeated your crown, which you stole from me, will be rightfully mine at last!"

"I *never* stole the crown," Glinda responded. "I *earned* it by treating the people of the Quadling Country with kindness and respect. And if you, or Ruby Rage, harm my champion, you will answer to me!"

Ruby Rage reappeared in downtown Kansas City and immediately used her pyrokinetic powers to destroy everything in sight.

SWAT teams quickly arrived on the scene to try and stop the villainess, but she easily overpowered them.

"ALL RIGHT, LADY," the SWAT captain exclaimed, as he and his men aimed their weapons at her. "STOP RIGHT NOW!"

"FOOLS, YOU THINK YOUR PALTRY WEAPONS CAN STOP ME?" Ruby Rage exclaimed.

"NOTHING CAN STOP RUBY RAGE," the villainess exclaimed as she fired a flame bolt at the SWAT team, sending them scattering.

"*NOTHING*," she exclaimed.

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Meanwhile, at North Kansas City High, Dorothy Donaldson was in one of her classes, when an announcement came on over the PA system.

"A powerful and deranged woman in leather has been spotted wrecking downtown Kansas City," the announcement said. "She is calling herself Ruby Rage and she has just held an entire SWAT team at bay."

"All classes are dismissed," the teacher said. "All of you head for home as soon as possible."

All of the students got out of their desks and headed single-file for the exit.

In minutes, all of the students, including Dorothy, were outside.

I've got to change to Gale-Force and get to the downtown area fast, Dorothy thought as she headed for a secluded spot.

Upon finding one, Dorothy focused on her benefactors, the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodsman, the Lion, and Locasta Tattypoo as she clicked her heels once.

"WHOOSH!" A magic cyclone rose up around the 15-year-old high school student, transforming her into Gale-Force.

Focusing on getting to downtown Kansas City, Gale-Force clicked the heels of her silver boots three times. In an instant, the superheroine arrived at her destination and saw flames everywhere.

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Have to stop the fires before they get out of control, Gale-Force thought.

Immediately, she clicked the heels of her silver boots twice, summoning a large cyclone, which she directed to deprive the flames of oxygen.

With the flames snuffed out, the superheroine clicked her heels twice, ending the cyclone.

That takes care of the flames, and now for - -, she thought as she looked around for, and soon found her quarry

"- - RUBY RAGE," Gale-Force exclaimed, attracting Ruby Rage's attention.

"Ah, Gale-Force," Ruby Rage said. "I *knew* my little bonfire would draw you out."

"Why?" Gale-Force asked.

"So that I can eliminate you," Ruby Rage answered, before using a teleport dash toward the superheroine with the intent on attacking her.

Instinctively, Gale-Force used her own teleport dash to sidestep the villainess.

She has a teleport dash, too, the superheroine thought. I wonder if she might have *other* powers as well?

Gale-Force, using the enhanced strength of the Lion, threw a pulled punch at Ruby Rage, which knocked the villainess back a few feet.

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"THAT'S *IT*, GALE-FORCE! PREPARE TO *SIZZLE*," Ruby Rage exclaimed as she fired a pyrokinetic blast at the superheroine.

Again with the flames, Gale-Force thought. Better get myself some shielding.

Gale-Force immediately and instinctively used the Tin Woodsman's power of Tin Mimicry to convert her body to organic tin at the last second before the pyrokinetic blast could reach her.

"I'M GONNA *CRUSH* YOU LIKE THE TIN CAN YOU *LITERALLY* ARE," Ruby Rage exclaimed as she sheathed herself in an exoskeleton of purple energy and tackled Gale-Force.

Soon, the two antagonists were grappling with each other. During the struggle, Gale-Force noticed something about the rubies on her opponent's vambraces.

Those rubies. They're *glowing*, the superheroine thought. They *must* be the *source* of her powers.

Gale-Force used a judo flip on Ruby Rage, sending her a few feet away. The superheroine resumed her normal form.

Ruby Rage recovered and got back up.

"Nice try, Gale-Force," she said. "Now I'm gonna - -"

"RROOAAAARRRR!" The superheroine used the Lion's enhanced roar to stun and disorient her opponent.

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Ruby Rage was unable to maintain the concentration needed to keep her exoskeleton of purple energy.

Using the Lion's enhanced speed and agility, Gale-Force quickly removed the vambraces from her opponent's wrists.

Ruby Rage transformed back into Almira Hamel before the superheroine's eyes.

"These rubies gave you your powers! Who gave them to you? *Talk,*" Gale-Force demanded as she showed the ruby vambraces to Almira.

"Melinda gave them to me after she summoned and transported me to her realm," Almira answered.

"Why?" The superheroine asked.

"She wanted me to be her champion," Almira replied. "Against Glinda and *her* champion, you."

"Where's Glinda?" Gale-Force asked.

"She's in Melinda's realm," Almira answered. "As a prisoner."

"Thanks," Gale-Force said.

"The vambraces. Give them back to me. Please," Almira begged.

"And let you use their powers to attack me again or to endanger more innocent lives?" Gale-Force asked as she again converted her body to organic tin.

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"I don't think so," the superheroine said as she crushed the vambraces. The rubies inside were turned into powder.

"NOOOOOOOOO!" Almira screamed.

Wishing to be in Melinda's realm, Gale-Force clicked the heels of her silver boots three times.

In an instant, Gale-Force appeared in Melinda's realm. The superheroine met Melinda herself and then saw Glinda in shackles.

"Glinda, hang on. I'll set you free in a second," Gale-Force told her mentor.

"You'll have to get through me, first, Gale-Force," Melinda told the superheroine.

"So be it," Gale-Force said.

"My energy bolts will take care of you," Melinda said as she fired them from her staff at the superheroine.

"They'll have to hit me first! And that's *not* gonna happen," Gale-Force said as she used the Lion's enhanced speed and agility, as well as Locasta Tattypoo's teleport dash, to evade the bolts of energy.

Gale-Force made her way to Melinda, who immediately threw a protective dark bubble around herself, causing the superheroine to bounce off it.

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"Let's see if I can burst your bubble - -, " Gale-Force said as she recovered. "*Literally!*"

Converting her body to organic tin and summoning her axe, Gale-Force tried to break through the bubble but was unable to.

No good. I didn't even make a *hole* in it, the superheroine thought as her form reverted back to flesh and blood.

Melinda fired more energy blasts from her staff at Gale-Force, who again used the Lion's enhanced speed and agility, and Locasta Tattypoo's teleport dash to evade them.

She's keeping me on the defensive, she thought. I need to come up with a good *offense* - - *fast*.

Clicking the heels of her silver boots twice, Gale-Force summoned a cyclone which she directed toward Melinda.

"Wh - What are you doing?" Melinda asked.

"I'm going to put you through the spin cycle," the superheroine answered.

The wicked witch was soon caught in the cyclone which knocked her into a nearby wall and rendered her unconscious.

Gale-Force removed a set of keys from Melinda's person. The superheroine used the keys to free Glinda from her shackles.

"Are you okay, Glinda?" Gale-Force asked.

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"Yes, my champion," a grateful Glinda answered. "Thanks to you."

"Now that Melinda's unconscious, there's another thing I have to take care of," Gale-Force said before walking toward the unconscious Melinda.

Upon approaching Melinda, the superheroine grabbed the witch's staff and broke it in two.

Gale-Force walked back to Glinda.

"Now, let's get you back to your own realm," the superheroine said with a smile,

Putting her arms around Glinda and wishing for them to be back in Glinda's realm, Gale-Force clicked the heels of her silver boots three times.

In an instant, Gale-Force and Glinda were back in the good witch's realm.

"I'm glad you're all right. When Melinda sent her champion, Ruby Rage after you with the intention of destroying you, I feared she would have succeeded," Glinda said.

"Ruby Rage is no longer a problem. I took care of her," Gale-Force said.

"How, my champion?" Glinda asked.

"I noticed that the rubies on her vambraces were glowing with energy and naturally figured that they were giving her her powers," the superheroine answered.

"So I removed the vambraces and crushed them, turning the rubies into powder," she continued.

"Now, she is just plain old Almira Hamel, CEO of HamelCo."

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In downtown Kansas City, Almira Hamel stood alone and brooded.

Someday, Gale-Force, I *will* regain the power you took from me, she thought. I *will* become Ruby Rage again! And *when* I do - -
I will *destroy* you!

THE END

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