

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

Written by Steven Bland

A few hours ago, at the Pentagon, Ruby Rage had finished using her dark-red ruby to corrupt the Army, Marine Corp, and Navy.

"They are now ready for your commands, Dark Fury," Ruby Rage told her evil confederate.

"Good," Dark Fury said before turning her attention to the Army.

"You will go to Washington, DC and attack the Capitol Building," she told them.

"Yes," the Army soldiers said in unison.

Dark Fury then turned toward the Marine Corp. and the Navy

"You will all go to New York City," she told them. "The Marines to the United Nations Building to eliminate the delegates, the Navy to destroy Ellis Island."

"Yes," the soldiers in the Marines and Navy said in unison.

"Now, leave and carry out your orders," Dark Fury told them.

The Army, Marine Corp, and Navy left the Pentagon at once.

Then, Dark Fury, using Ugu's Teleportation abilities, and Ruby Rage, slamming her vambraces together, teleported to Edwards Air Force Base in an instant, where Rage used her dark-red ruby to corrupt all of the Air Force pilots.

"You will get into your fighter jets and fire upon everyone in the streets of downtown Los Angeles," Dark Fury told them.

Steven

Bland

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

"Yes," the Air Force pilots said in unison.

Dark Fury, using Ugu's Teleportation abilities, and Ruby Rage, slamming her vambraces together, teleported back to the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia.

Later, using her power of clairvoyance, granted her by the pink ruby, Ruby Rage gave herself and Dark Fury viewings of each corrupted branch of the armed forces carrying out the missions Dark Fury herself had given them.

"In only a short time, the armed forces will undermine America, rendering the country ripe for our takeover," a pleased Ruby Rage said.

"Splendid," Dark Fury said with an evil smile.

However, she soon saw the Techni-Crusader arriving in downtown Los Angeles to stop the Air Force, the Sprintress arriving at the Capitol Building to assist Patriot Prime against the Army, the Blue Mantis and Fire Opal arriving at the United Nations Building to stop the Marines, and Leonard Larvan and Mortimer arriving at Ellis Island to protect it from the Navy.

"NO! THOSE MEDDLING SUPERHEROES WILL RUIN *EVERYTHING*," Ruby Rage exclaimed. "I *MUST DO SOMETHING TO STOP THEM!*"

Ruby Rage used her pink ruby to scan everywhere for mercenaries she could hire. She found Soundblast in Los Angeles, California, Blitzkreig in Washington, DC, and Tigereye, Ice Queen, and Magnetik in New York City.

Steven

Bland

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

Perfect, she thought with an evil smile, before turning her attention back to the Techni-Crusader in downtown Los Angeles.

This armored interloper is one of those accursed superheroes who, like Gale-Force, are daring to defy me and interfere with my well-laid plans, Ruby Rage thought. I must send someone to teach him a lesson.

Ruby Rage got out her cell phone and started dialing a number.

Elsewhere, Soundblast received Ruby Rage's call via his helmet communications systems.

"Soundblast," Ruby Rage said. "I have a job for you. I want you to head for downtown Los Angeles to eliminate the Techni-Crusader! And I will pay you two million dollars!"

"You got it," Soundblast said as he took off.

Ruby Rage hung up.

Then, with her pink ruby, she turned her attention back to Patriot Prime and the Sprintress who were still battling the corrupted army. The villainess then turned her attention to Calvin Horton, who was nearby.

Steven

Bland

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

There he is, Ruby Rage thought. Calvin Horton, the test subject for an experimental prototype symbiote for super-soldiers. The test was a failure but it was fortunate that I was able to get to him before the symbiote was to be removed from his body. I had somehow anticipated the possibility of a superhero investigating the attack on the Capitol Building, so I had Horton stationed there and hiding in plain sight.

He's wearing his earpiece cell phone, she thought before dialing his number.

"BLITZKRIEG, SUMMON YOUR ARMOR AND DISPOSE OF THOSE COSTUMED INTERLOPERS NOW," Ruby Rage commanded Horton, who complied.

Ruby Rage then turned her attention to the Blue Mantis and Fire Opal, who had entered the United Nations Building, and then to Leonard Larvan and Mortimer heading toward Ellis Island.

I can't let them interfere, she thought before dialing another number. They must be stopped.

Somewhere in Manhattan, three costumed mercenaries Tigereye, Ice Queen, and Magnetik received orders from a female voice over their high-tech headsets.

"Tigereye. Ice Queen. Magnetik," Ruby Rage said. "I have need of your skills and your extraordinary mutant powers! The Blue Mantis and Fire Opal are at the United Nations Building to stop the Marines, while someone and a tall robot are heading for Ellis Island, no doubt to stop the Navy! You must *stop* them at *all costs*!"

"Tigereye, Ice Queen," Ruby Rage said. "You will head to the United Nations Building to take care of Blue Mantis and Fire Opal!"

Steven

Bland

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

"And, Tigereye?" Ruby Rage asked. "Are your high-tech gauntlet gloves working?"

Tigereye cybernetically activated the gloves through a cybernetic headband inside his helmet.

Laser claws flashed on and out.

"Oh, yeeeahhh," he said with a fiendish smile. "Normal claws wouldn't get past the Blue Mantis's dermal armor, but these babies *will!* He's as good as *dead!*"

"He'd *better be,*" Ruby Rage said. "I paid a *good sum of money* to buy those from Tina Madison and her Orion Corporation! "And I want my *money's worth!*"

"You got it," Tigereye said.

"Ice Queen," Ruby Rage said. "Your mutant power of cryokinesis will be more than a match for Fire Opal! You must overcome her!"

"I will," Ice Queen said.

"Magnetik," Ruby Rage said again. "You must go to Ellis Island and intercept that stranger and his robot companion!"

"That robot will be no match for my magnetic powers," Magnetik said. "And once I've destroyed it, I will use my powers to manipulate the iron traces in its human companion's blood and destroy him as well!"

"You have your orders then," Ruby Rage said. "Now, *go!*"

Ruby Rage hung up.

Steven

Bland

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

In the present, inside the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, Gale-Force started to regain consciousness.

"Ohhhh," she moaned as she started to get back on her feet. "What happened?"

There was a brief pause.

Wait, *now* I remember, the superheroine thought. I fought Ruby Rage and her new ally, Dark Fury. While I was facing off against DF, RR attacked me from behind.

Ruby Rage said that she was going to "improve the minds" of the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps, she thought. Most likely, her intent was to *corrupt* all of them. For all I know, she probably *already did*.

Between Ruby Rage, Dark Fury, and possibly even the corrupted armed forces, I'm going to need some help. And I know just *who* to contact, the superheroine thought.

Visuallizing the inside of her room at her house, Gale-Force clicked the heels of her magic silver boots three times. Instantaneously, she arrived at her destination.

The superheroine picked up her cell phone and dialed Max Miller's phone number. Soon, she got an answer.

"Hi, Max, this is Gale-Force," she said. "I really need your help."

"You got it," Max said.

Steven

Bland

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

"I'll pick you up," Gale-Force said. "Where are you now?"

"I'm in my room at my house," Max answered.

Focusing on Max and clicking the heels of her magic silver boots three times, Gale-Force teleported to his house in an instant.

"Where are we going?" Max asked.

"To the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia," Gale-Force told him. "A couple of super-villains named Ruby Rage and Dark Fury have corrupted, or are corrupting every branch of the armed forces and turning them against America."

"Holy Toledo," Max said. "Let's go."

Gale-Force grabbed Max and, focusing on the Pentagon, clicked the heels of her magic silver boots three times. The two were transported there in an instant.

"Care to fill me in on who Ruby Rage and Dark Fury are?" Max asked.

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

"Ruby Rage wears vambraces and each contains three differently colored rubies. Her left vambrace has a brownish red ruby, which enhances her strength, speed, durability, reflexes and agility to superhuman levels, a pink-red ruby that grants her a teleport dash, and a dark red ruby which corrupted her but now gives her the power to corrupt other people. Her right vambrace has a bright-red ruby which gives her the power to manipulate fire for various effects, a pink ruby which makes her clairvoyant, and a purplish-red ruby that enables her to sheath herself in an exoskeleton of purple energy. She has long black hair with bright-red streaks and is dressed in a dark red leather ensemble with vest, pants, and boots.." Gale-Force answered. "Dark Fury has Ugu, the Shoemaker's Tactical Analysis and Teleportation Abilities, Crunch's Organic Stone Mimicry, Superhuman Strength, and Size Enhancement, the Kalidah's enhanced strength, speed, endurance, durability, and senses, as well as the Weather Manipulation of the Wicked Witch of the East. She wears black leather pants and boots, a dark red bustier, a black leather jacket with rolled up sleeves, a choker with the Oz insignia on the front, and spiked wrist bands."

"And you're going to be meeting them very soon," Gale-Force added. "C'mon."

She and Max wasted no time looking for Dark Fury and Ruby Rage and soon found them.

"It's over, Rage and Fury," Gale-Force told them.

"GALE-FORCE," Dark Fury and Ruby Rage said in unison.

"We made the mistake of letting you live *last time*," Ruby Rage said.

"But we *won't* make that mistake *again*," Dark Fury added.

Steven

Bland

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

Using the purplish-red ruby in her right vambrace, Ruby Rage sheathed herself in a large exoskeleton of purple energy, while Dark Fury converted her body to organic stone and enhanced her size.

"*Bring it,*" Gale-Force said as she converted her body to organic tin.

It's a good thing I've learned to be in a state of tranquil fury at all times, Max thought. Allowing me to keep my alter ego at bay through mere discipline until I need him.

And I need him *now*, he thought as he willed his transformation into his green-skinned human-elephant hybrid form. Once Max's transformation was complete, his fear pheromones slightly affected not only Dark Fury and Ruby Rage, but Gale-Force as well, though the superheroine managed to fight it off.

"I'll take care of Dark Fury," Gale-Force told the transformed Max. "You handle Ruby Rage. Okay?"

The transformed Max nodded in agreement before turning his attention to Ruby Rage, who prepared to attack the heroes.

"TUSKAR CHARGE," the transformed Max exclaimed before charging toward the villainess, staggering her.

Dark Fury threw a punch at Gale-Force, who barely managed to evade it. The superheroine threw a punch of her own at her opponent who anticipated the punch and sidestepped it.

Steven

Bland

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

"Hah! I *saw* that punch coming a *mile away*," Dark Fury bragged before throwing a punch at her opponent.

Gale-Force launched every physical attack at Dark Fury, who anticipated every single one.

At the same time, Ruby Rage and Tuskar continued to battle each other. However, Ruby Rage tried to overcome the behemoth's fear-inducing pheromones as she pressed her attack upon him, but to no avail. The pheromones got the better of her. Tuskar pounded at Ruby Rage's large purple exoskeleton, which soon showed a crack. The green-skinned behemoth continued to pound away, making more cracks in the armor. In minutes, Ruby Rage's exoskeleton was destroyed.

I-It's *impossible*, a stunned Ruby Rage thought. He actually *destroyed* my exoskeleton!

Maybe, just maybe, she thought. I can corrupt this creature's will and turn him to my side!

Ruby Rage used her dark-red ruby to try to corrupt Tuskar, but the behemoth resisted.

Picking up Ruby Rage by her feet, Tuskar slammed her into the floor over his head left to right a few times until she was rendered unconscious.

At the same time, Gale-Force was having problems with Dark Fury.

"Give up, Gale-Force," Dark Fury told her opponent. "Thanks to the Tactical Analysis of Ugu, the Shoemaker, I'm always *two steps* ahead of you! You're no match for me!"

"You're right," Gale-Force said as she reverted back to flesh and blood and surrendered.

Satisfied with her victory, Dark Fury reverted back to flesh and blood as well.

Steven

Bland

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

Suddenly, Gale-Force threw a sucker punch, converting her body to organic tin, once more, at the last second. Dark Fury was down for the count.

That sucker punch should render Dark Fury unconscious for hours, the superheroine thought before looking around and seeing Tuskar standing over an unconscious Ruby Rage. Tuskar relaxed and reverted back to his alter ego of Max Miller.

"Good work, Max. You've defeated Ruby Rage," Gale-Force told Max before turning her attention to the villainess. "Now, all that's left is to get rid of her 'costume jewelry'."

After removing the vambraces from Ruby Rage's wrists, Gale-Force, still in her organic tin form, removed each of the rubies from the bands and dropped the vambraces, which landed next to her feet. The superheroine ground the rubies into powder with her hands and crushed the vambraces underneath her feet. As a result, the Air Force, Army, Marines, and Navy were all freed from the dark-red ruby's influence and Ruby Rage reverted back to Almira Hamel.

Resuming her flesh and blood form, Gale-Force picked up the unconscious form of Dark Fury and draped it over her right shoulder. Then, the superheroine touched Max.

"I just need to make a few stops before taking you home, okay?" Gale-Force said.

"Okay," Max agreed.

Clicking the heels of her magic silver boots three times while focusing on the inside of Princess Ozma's palace, all three were transported there in an instant, where they were greeted by Princess Ozma herself.

Steven

Bland

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

"Greetings, Gale-Force," Princess Ozma said. "It's a pleasure to meet Glinda's champion from another world."

"Thank you, Princess Ozma," Gale-Force said. "Something has happened to Glinda. She was placed in a 100-year long coma by Singra and Melinda."

"I see. And, who are these people with you?" Princess Ozma asked.

"The boy next to me is my friend, Max," the superheroine answered. "He helped me save my world from destruction."

"Hello, your Majesty," Max said as he bowed before the princess.

Then, Gale-Force put Dark Fury's unconscious form on the floor at Ozma's feet.

"This is Dark Fury," the superheroine said. "She is from my world and she was given Ugu's Tactical Analysis and Teleportation Abilities, Crunch's Organic Stone Mimicry, Superhuman Strength, and Size Enhancement, the Kalidah's Enhanced Strength, Speed, Endurance, Durability, and Senses, as well as the Weather Manipulation of the Wicked Witch of the East."

"Can you keep an eye on her?" Gale-Force asked Ozma.

"I can have her taken to one of my dungeons," Ozma offered.

"Thank you," the superheroine said.

"Guards," the princess called out. The guards responded and arrived accordingly.

"Yes, your majesty?" One of the guards said.

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

"Escort this woman to one of the dungeons," Princess Ozma said as she grabbed the unconscious Dark Fury and handed her to the guards. "She is an enemy of Glinda's champion, Gale-Force."

"Right away, your majesty," the guard said as he and his fellow guards took Dark Fury with them and escorted her away.

"Is there anything that can wake Glinda from her coma?" Gale-Force asked "Can anything be done to help her?"

"Look to the magic picture, Gale-Force," Ozma said as she pointed the superheroine's attention to the magic picture itself, which showed a forest of trees with enchanted apples.

"These are the enchanted apples," Ozma told Gale-Force. "Each one can nullify any spell. Any one of them can revive Glinda."

"Then, I'll go there and get one," Gale-Force said as she started to click her heels, before Ozma stopped her.

"First, you must see Valynn," Ozma said. "She is the guardian of the enchanted apples."

"Got it," the superheroine said.

Clicking the heels of her magic silver boots three times and focusing on Valynn and the forest of enchanted apples, Gale-Force arrived there in an instant and found Valynn who was startled to see her.

"Who are you?" Valynn asked.

Steven

Bland

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

"It's okay. I mean you no harm," Gale-Force assured her. "I am Gale-Force, I'm a friend and ally. I have come to ask for one of your enchanted apples."

"No," Valynn said.

"Please. It's *vital*," Gale-Force insisted. "The evil duo of Melinda the Mean and Singra put my mentor, Glinda the Good, in a 100-year coma. And I heard that any one of your enchanted apples has the power to revive her. All I ask is for *one* apple. *Just one.* Please."

Valynn paused for a moment.

"All right," Valynn said before going to the tree of enchanted apples and picking one of them.

"If you were chosen by Glinda to be in her service," Valynn said as she handed the enchanted apple she picked to the superheroine. "Then, you can be trusted."

"Thank you," Gale-Force said as she accepted the apple.

With the enchanted apple in her possession and in her jacket pocket, Gale-Force focused on the inside of Princess Ozma's palace, while clicking her heels three times. In an instant, she was at her chosen destination.

"Were you able to get one of the enchanted apples," Ozma asked.

"Yes, Princess Ozma," Gale-Force answered. "Glinda will soon be awakened from her coma."

The superheroine turned to Max.

"But, first," Gale-Force said. "I need to take you home. Ready?"

"As I'll ever be," Max said as he went to Gale-Force and held onto her.

Steven

Bland

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

Clicking her heels three times while focusing on the inside of Max's room at his house, Gale-Force and her passenger arrived at their destination in an instant.

"Thank you for your help," Gale-Force told Max. "Now, I need to go to Glinda's realm and save her."

"Good luck," Max told her.

Focusing on Glinda's realm and being at the good witch's side, Gale-Force clicked her heels three times.

In Glinda's realm, Melinda and Singra were furious.

"NO!" Melinda raged. "EVERYTHING WAS GOING SO WELL!"

She turned to Singra.

"YOUR CANDIDATE FAILED MISERABLY," Melinda raged.

"AS DID YOURS," Singra replied angrily.

"AT LEAST WE PUT GLINDA IN A COMA SHE WON'T GET OUT OF FOR A HUNDRED YEARS," Melinda exclaimed.

Suddenly, Gale-Force materialized at Glinda's side before Singra's and Melinda's eyes..

"GALE-FORCE," Singra exclaimed.

Clicking her heels twice, the superheroine summoned a cyclone to surround herself and Glinda and to keep the two evil witches at bay.

Steven

Bland

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

Inside the cyclone, which provided them cover, Gale-Force took the enchanted apple out of her jacket pocket and gave the fruit to Glinda. Soon, the good witch was revived.

"Gale-Force, my champion," Glinda said with a smile as she woke.

"Welcome back, Glinda," Gale-Force said with a smile. "Now, what say we get rid of your two uninvited guests?"

"I thought you'd never ask," Glinda replied with a smile.

Gale-Force manipulated the cyclone she had already summoned to go after Singra and Melinda. The cyclone caught the two witches and shook them up until they were too rattled to use their magic.

With the evil witches rendered helpless, Gale-Force clicked her heels twice causing the cyclone to fade.

"And now, I will banish them to another realm farther than the farthest star," Glinda vowed as she used her magic to do just that. Soon, Singra and Melinda were gone.

"Thank you, my champion," a grateful Glinda told Gale-Force. "You have done well."

"My pleasure. But, I'd better head home before my mom worries about me," a smiling Gale-Force said.

"I understand," a smiling Glinda said. "And farewell."

"Farewell," the smiling superheroine said before she clicked her heels three times while focusing on the outside of her home.

Steven

Bland

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

Arriving at her home in an instant, Gale-Force clicked her heels once while focusing on her desire to return to her alter ego.

"WHOOSH!" A magic cyclone rose up around the superheroine, transforming her back into Dorothy Donaldson, who quickly went inside her home where she saw her mother watching the television news in the living room.

"All of America can rest easy now," the television reporter said. "The Army, Air Force, Marines, and Navy are all back to normal. It was revealed that they were all under some strange spell. Thankfully, that spell is now broken. The country is safe, thanks to superheroes like the Techni-Crusader, the Sprintress, Patriot Prime, the Blue Mantis, Fire Opal, the unnamed man with the robot and the robot bees, and Gale-Force, who was accompanied and aided by a hulking green-skinned human-elephant hybrid."

Dorothy smiled to herself.

Mrs. Donaldson turned away from the television set to greet her daughter.

"So, how was your day today, Dorothy?" Mrs. Donaldson asked with a smile. "Or should I call you - - Gale-Force?"

Gale-Force #8 - "The Showdown"

Dorothy was shocked.

"Let's talk, shall we?" A smiling Mrs. Donaldson asked.

THE END



- 18 -



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