

Precipitate

ERIN REDFERN

He had it in the bag.
He could have drawn
the string. Instead
he capered around an open flame
while the fledgling queen
tried and failed to guess
his name. Big mistake.
“Rumpelstiltskin,” she says,
and he stamps one small foot
straight through
the polished marble floor.
(Who among us hasn’t
known this rage?)
He has to haul himself out
while her courtiers laugh
tears into their eyes.
Back at his cottage
in the woods he cooks
a thin stew, tipples
air that tastes of smoke
and rue. The campfire flares
like a heart, spits on
her triumph, his shame:

he has only himself to blame.

He might have known
supersaturation of elation
precipitates ruin.