

PRETTY DEADLY by Kelsey Josund

EXCERPT

How interesting, Cinna thought. She had spent so many hours bent over a stove in the kitchen or crouched before the hearth, stoking flames carefully that refused to light. But she had prepared: this house was waiting tinder, ready to be consumed.

She couldn't hear the screams over the roar of the flames, but surely they were there. Strangely, she didn't feel cheated to have not heard their voices. It was fine that they died in silence.

It did not take long for the neighbors to begin streaming out of their own houses, and she did hear their screams. They swarmed around the flames, politely mute once they realized they could not do anything, full of awe before the enormity of the fire. Cinna blended into the crowd, nearly invisible in her costume.

At last, just as she had always pledged she would, she watched the house fall in on itself.