



by Laura Freudenthaler  
Jung und Jung  
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Fiction

We are delighted that this  
book has now been  
published in English  
translation.

## Arson

### *Arson*

#### review

Laura Freudenthaler's timely literary novel is rooted in the present-day climate crisis. *Arson* chronicles the nightmarish scenarios in the daily life of an unnamed narrator as the climate crisis ravages her life, relationships, sleep, and ability to relate to the people around her.

The opening sections of the novel convey the protagonist's disorientation as she repeatedly wakes up from periods of disordered sleep. The story transitions from her internal world – her thoughts, bodily sensations, dreams and nightmares, and the spare rooms she inhabits – to the external world. The woman moves repeatedly, seeking refuge, leaving the city for the countryside, abandoning her social life with friends for relationships maintained at a distance, almost exclusively by phone or text message.

The other main character is Ulrich, an insomniac scientist who works as a wildfire expert at a meteorological institute. He and the narrator have a relationship. She tries seeing a psychiatrist, but he turns out to be a pill-pusher, and she burns his prescription. Ulrich works with a sleep therapist to address his own insomnia.

Obsession, data collection, observation, and detail play a huge role in the novel. Alongside the narrator's carefully logging of sleepless nights, we witness Ulrich's scrupulous records of wildfires, as more and more parts of the world catch fire. Ulrich's data collection deploys curious abbreviations and acronyms, reflecting how the world we are

being shown requires its own language.

The narrator remains sober, calm, and collected while watching everything spiral out of control. In one episode she trips and falls, needing stitches in both her upper and lower lips. At the end, fleeing a local bonfire, she falls again, this time busting her teeth as well as both lips as the story verges on horror. Freudenthaler deploys subtle, richly literary metaphors throughout.

*Arson* is strange and subtle, slowly initiating the reader into its highly alienated yet relatable realm. The occasional disorientation the reader feels is an asset, encouraging us to read even more closely in order to decipher where we find ourselves, both in the story and in our own lives. This deeply original book is creepy and haunting in its sparseness, a highly controlled account of a situation that is rapidly heading out of control.

Find out more here: <https://jungundjung.at/arson/>

## about the author



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Laura Freudenthaler was born in Salzburg in 1984 and lives in Vienna. Her debut novel *Der Schädel von Madeleine* was published in 2014. She has received numerous prizes for her work and was awarded the European Union literary prize for her second novel *Geistergeschichte* (2019). Her work has been translated into multiple languages, including but not limited to Italian, Dutch, Danish, Swedish and Polish.

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Previous works: *Der Schädel von Madeleine*, Muery Salzmann (2014); *Die Königin schweigt*, Droschl (2017); *Geistergeschichte*, Droschl (2019).

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