

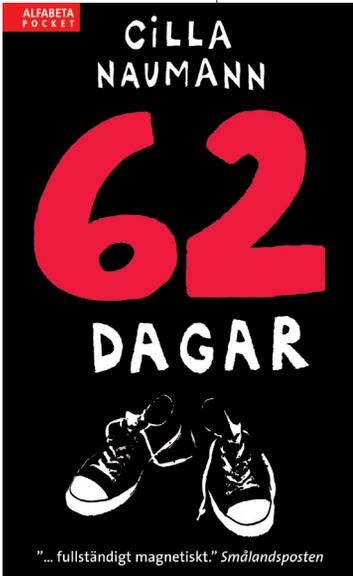
from:

62 Days

Cilla Naumann

translated and introduced by

Nichola Smalley



62 dagar (62 Days),
Alfabeta, 2011

Foreign rights: Anna
Kaisa Danielsson,
Alfabeta, annakaisa.danielsson@alfabeta.se

62 dagar was
reviewed by Kristina
Sjögren in SBR
2012:2.

62 Dagar is set in Southern Sweden, in a coastal community that fills with city-dwellers every summer. Fifteen-year-old Tom and his brother Bro have been coming to the area with their parents forever, and things have always been great, until this year. This year it just rains and rains, and everything seems grey. Then something happens, and grey turns to black.

Cilla Naumann is an author of adult and young adult fiction, a screenwriter and a journalist. *Springa med åror* (Running With Oars), published in 2012, mirrors the events in 62 Dagar from the perspective of Monika, the mother of Lassamiss and childhood friend of Tom and Bro's mother Johanna. Naumann's books have twice been nominated for the August Prize, and have won a number of other prizes. She took part in SELTA's children's literature workshop in London in November 2014.

29th Day

The Cross

The evening it happens, I'm completely unprepared. It just feels like an ordinary evening, a July evening like any other at the summerhouse.

A bloody boring evening in fact. It's pouring with rain like it has done every day since Joel took off for football camp with his old man.

I'm down as a dog. Frigging down when I wake up in the morning, frigging down the whole day and still frigging down when I leave the house after dinner.

I don't know why everything feels so black – it just does – as though there's no way anything could get my mood to change.

Maybe that's always the way when something big happens. That afterwards

you think it was weird that you didn't realise there was something troubling in the air. That nothing, not a single thing, warned you. That there was nothing to tip you off, to let you know you should be on your guard.

Or you think that, and expect it to be that way, just because you're used to always sensing when something bad's about to happen in a film.

In reality there's no camera filming from over your shoulder. You get no help at all from zoom-ins or boom shots. No soundtrack pumping up the atmosphere in the background, no lighting guys to shine the spotlights on the important bits and no screenwriter to figure out a good ending. You're just thrown right into the action before you've even realised something big or significant is happening. Thrown right into life, and you're meant to get what's going on straight away.

It's crazy that you can be so brutally alone in your own life.

Is there really no one who can help a bit?

Anyway, that evening everything feels normal, nothing is particularly different. I've been sitting at home playing computer games the whole day and I feel heavy and tired and cross for no reason.

In Arvid's garage it stinks of petrol and it's all go and loud music. His brothers have been souping up the mopeds all week and never seem to get bored. Soon there'll be shiny new drilled exhausts on all the machines and they make so much noise their old man comes in and says they're not allowed to ride down past the houses at night.

'It stops people sleeping and then they're up here moaning about you,' he says, and goes out again.

The door slams behind him.

Seems everyone's cross tonight.

Arvid is walking around with a petrol can and afterwards I'll hear myself saying that everyone in there seemed really hyped up when I got there, but at the time I don't think so. Not in so many words. Mostly I just think they're annoying. Irritating. And I know I think it's strange that they never seem to get bored with souping up their mopeds. Some evenings they're so in bits we can't even head off and do the things we want to. We end up having to give each other lifts or ride our bikes.

Somehow in the end I manage to figure out that it's the Baptists' tent they've got their sights on this evening – the Bappo tent that's set up on the meadow, like it is every year, for the whole of July.

The tent doesn't feel the slightest bit exciting right now. The rain's been bucketing down for a week and everything's wet and muddy up by Summer Farm. Wet and muddy just like everything seems at the moment. Restless too. The days just fly by and soon it'll be time for school again. When I think about that everything feels even more depressing.

God, what a let-down of a summer!

We only spent a few days on the pier at the beginning of the holidays. No long, burning-hot days, no record-breakingly long swimming sessions, no nights in our sleeping bags on the beach. Just rain and wind and evenings shut up in Arvid's oil-soaked garage.

And Ville's been staying with Arvid almost the whole summer. Not with Bro and me like he always used to before his parents split up and sold the house.

And Miriam ...

I don't know where that went. Everything that seemed so easy and exciting at the start of the summer holidays just seems to be soaking wet and awkward now, in the rain.

Every time you want to see her you've got to call her first and go round to her place and come up with something fun to do. Can't just head down to the pier and swim like normal. Can't go pick her up and buzz around on the moped down by the beach and feel her soft arms around your waist. No one thinks it's fun to sit on the back of a cold, wet moped.

No one wants that. I don't either.

For the last few days I've even been wondering whether I was right to give the training camp a miss again this year. Maybe it would've been more fun to go to Norrköping and train with the guys on the team, instead of just mouldering away in the rain down here.

'Ah, come on,' says Arvid.

And then we go.

*

Afterwards I try to explain that I didn't actually know what we were going to do, that I'd got to the garage late, so late I hadn't seen or heard what had been said or planned and didn't know who'd come up with the idea, that no one had actually told me directly what the plans were.

But it makes no difference what I say.

Or how I try to explain myself.

By that point it's already too late.

*

Out on the road, the rain lashes against my helmet and my hands and knees get wet and cold. I've longed for this first summer with my own moped for years. And now look at it, raining every day.

Damn rain, I think again and again and again and feel that low rage well up. A rage I don't like and don't want to have. It's not directed anywhere, it just lies like a poisonous layer over everything, spreading out over the road and making everything look hopelessly wet and ugly. Even Petter who's riding in front of me. I stare at his beaten-up plimsolls and it's like the mood sets like glue, leaving a load of crap everywhere.

Like in Mum's mouth.

During dinner I sat there, hating her for the way she chewed her food. She looked bizarre. I didn't want to look at her. It made the food taste bad, watching her cramming it in.

I was probably staring at her, because after a while she seemed to realise what I was thinking and stopped eating. It's always like that with her. She sees what you're thinking. Particularly if you're thinking bad things about her. And then she gets sad.

She shouldn't be sad. I don't like it.



*

Up by the Baptists' tent everything's calm and quiet. The rain patters cosily against the canvas and low music can be heard. The service is still going on. There doesn't seem to be anyone standing outside, smoking or talking on the phone. I guess no one wants to be out in the rain.

We put our mopeds behind the dog roses and creep round the back way in behind the tent, along the old wooden fences around the meadow. We see that the car park's full of cars and that all of them have a pink parking token tucked under their windscreen wipers.

'Lassamiss does his duty in all weathers,' Ville says and does that gesture under his nose that's so perfect it not only makes him look like, but really be King Lassamiss himself.

And we convulse with laughter.

It feels good when the laughter finally bubbles up inside me. At first I feel as though my mouth's been frozen solid all day. That the crossness has been fixed over my face like a hard mask and it's finally coming away.

Ville carries on with his Lassamiss show and we see him even though he's not there, even though we all know he's sitting in Bappo-Britta's kitchen just like every evening there's a service, stuffing himself with the congregation's cinnamon buns.

Lassamiss is the kind who does exactly as he's told. If someone tells him to keep an eye on the car park, he keeps an eye on the car park. If someone tells him all the cars have to have a car park ticket on their windscreens, then each one will have a car park ticket on the windscreen.

And now Ville is bringing Lassamiss to life before our eyes. He combs his fringe down across his forehead and wipes his snot away just like he always does and we see him flailing his arms and waving to all the cars.

And Ville is careful to tear all the tickets just as straight as Lassamiss does. And he licks his thumb and then licks again and sometimes he licks a third time before tearing ever so slowly and carefully in his little invisible pink ticket book with his big hands.

We writhe with laughter.

He's almost better than the real thing. And we laugh and laugh, there between the cars.

In the midst of all the laughter I see Arvid dragging the petrol can and of course I know something's going on.

I do.

I'm not totally stupid.

But I still don't know quite what and I can't imagine it being anything genuinely dangerous.

I don't.

But what does that matter afterwards?

Not until we are in our usual hideout under the elderberry bush by the right-hand side of the tent do I ask what the petrol's for.

'Just a bit of fun,' Arvid says and grins again, and at that moment I hear the piano and the singing fall silent inside the tent and it sounds as though everyone's getting up to go.

Quickly, Arvid runs up and pours the petrol in a cross on the gravel and he throws himself down beside us again in the nick of time before the tent

CILLA
NAUMANN

Also by Cilla
Naumann, published
by Alfabetta:

Värsta brorsan (My
Older Brother), 2006

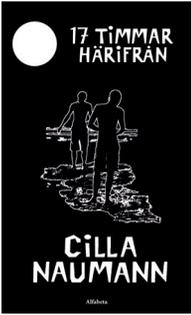
Kulor i hjärtat (Bullets
in Your Heart), 2009

17 timmar härifrån
(17 Hours from
Here), 2013

Cilla Naumann's
other works include
The Lesson, Readux,
2013, transl. Saskia
Vogel.

Cilla Naumann's
post about the
translation workshop
is on the SELTA blog:
[http://selta.org.uk/
guest-post-by-cilla-
naumann.php](http://selta.org.uk/guest-post-by-cilla-naumann.php)





opens and people begin to stream out. Just as the first people step out onto the gravel, someone, I still don't know who, throws a match, and the cross goes up in flames.

A cross is burning in the gravel outside the Baptists' tent.
It burns in the gravel in the rain.

Silence falls. Even the rain stops pattering on the canvas. Everything is silent apart from a little rustling sound from the fire that quickly burns up on the gravel and goes out.

But my heart is thumping and my blood crashes like a waterfall inside me and I think the others must be able to hear how loud it is.

Then a woman starts shrieking and I can't hear anything but her shrieks. She falls to her knees with clenched hands and behind her a load more throw themselves down crying and shouting that God has heard their prayers.

It's total hysteria.

But I don't get to see that much because Bro kicks me in the back and pushes me backwards and hisses in my ear that I have to run like hell. And before I manage to get up and get going, he's disappeared among the nettles behind the farm next door and the others are all gone too and I don't have time to think about where I'm running or where I'm going to hide. Suddenly I'm up on the road, running like hell, just like he said.

I run away from the tent, away from the Bappos, away from the ministers and the mopeds. The only thing I think about is getting as far away as possible.

