



Publicity Contacts:

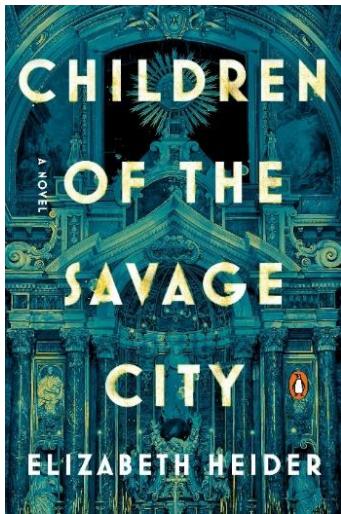
Alexis Nowicki, Senior Publicist—Viking/Penguin: 212-366-2225 | anowicki@prh.com
Kristina Fazzalaro, Associate Director of Publicity—Viking/Penguin: 212-366-2078 | kfazzalaro@prh.com

Some cities feed on secrets. Naples is ravenous.

CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY

ELIZABETH HEIDER

AUTHOR OF **MAY THE WOLF DIE**



“Intricate plotting and a sprawling cast make for a slow burn at first, but the book’s back half is a high-stakes, blood-soaked sprint that demands a sequel. Fans of gritty procedurals and international thrillers alike will be gratified.” —*Publishers Weekly*

“This story is dark, smart, and emotionally honest. It asks what power does to people and what people will do to protect whatever is left when power strips everything else away. It is atmospheric. It is character-driven. It is crime fiction at its finest.”
—Teresa Brock, *Best Books Thriller Books* (*five-star review*)

“*Children of the Savage City* is the best kind of mystery: a classic whodunit that’s modern, alive, and kicking. With precision and effortless prose, Heider brings to life a devastating crime, memorable characters, and the beautifully sinister city of Naples. You can feel the city’s grit, smell the motorbike exhaust, taste the cornettos. I plunged into this book and didn’t want to surface.”

—I. S. Berry, author of *The Peacock and the Sparrow*

This winter, Penguin Books is thrilled to publish the standalone sequel to **Elizabeth Heider**’s critically acclaimed debut novel, *May the Wolf Die*, **CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY** (on sale: Feb. 17). *May the Wolf Die* introduced Nikki Serafino, an investigator in Naples, Italy, working as a liaison between the U.S. military and local police. It was named one of the best crime novels of the year by *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Washington Post*, and *Publishers Weekly*. *Sarah Weinman* raved: *May the Wolf Die* “bowled me over with its descriptions of Naples—seedy, beautiful, baroque—and the trials of its main character.”

A propulsive, labyrinthine police procedural with a strong sense of place and complicated, believable characters **CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY** returns readers to the streets of Naples, where a peaceful evening mass at the historic Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo is shattered when a young au pair is killed in one of the cathedral’s quiet chapels. The daughter of the U.S. Ambassador sees it happen—but she’ll speak only to one person: Nikki Serafino.

Shaken by betrayal in her last high-profile case, Nikki has retreated from the relentless vigilance that once defined her work as liaison between Italian police and the U.S. military. Withdrawn and mistrustful, she works her shifts, cares for her aging family, teaches self-defense classes, and avoids entanglement. But this case threatens her self-imposed invisibility—drawing her into a web of lies and resurfacing old wounds and buried loyalties. The murder investigation leads Nikki and her friend, Naples officer Valerio Alfieri, into a shadow architecture of power: built to protect the guilty and hide their secrets at any cost. Can she and Valerio—each carrying dangerous debts—resist the undertow of corruption that swallows truth whole?

Set against the chaos of modern Naples—the city of Roberto Saviano's *Gomorrah* and Elena Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend*—where grace and corruption share the same narrow streets, Nikki and Valerio navigate a landscape where even the most principled must confront the cost of survival.



About the Author: **Elizabeth Heider** is the author of *May the Wolf Die*, named a *New York Times* Best Crime Novel, a *Washington Post* Best Mystery, and one of *Publishers Weekly*'s best books of 2024. Her short fiction has been recognized by the Santa Fe Writers Project and New Century Writer Awards. She holds a PhD in physics and most recently worked as a program manager for Microsoft's AI4Science and as a scientist in the European Space Agency's human spaceflight program. She's authored original scientific research, a patent, analytical reports for the US government and military, and coauthored a journal article with astronaut Thomas Pesquet. She lived and worked in Naples, Italy, as a civilian analyst embedded with the US Navy's mission in Africa, where she deployed aboard US and European naval ships. Originally from Utah, she now lives in The Hague.

CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY

By Elizabeth Heider

Penguin Books | On Sale: February 17, 2026

Paperback | ISBN: 9780143138198 | Price: \$20.00

Also available as an e-book and audiobook.

For more information, please visit:

www.penguinrandomhouse.com

Praise for Elizabeth Heider's MAY THE WOLF DIE

“An intriguing mystery, a smart central character to root for, gorgeous setting, and authentic detail. This tense and brooding debut is everything crime fiction should be.”

—Dervla McTiernan, author of *The Murder Rule* and *The Ruin*

“Heider delivers an intricate and impressive debut . . . Nikki, in particular, jumps off the page, with her struggles as a woman in law enforcement vividly highlighted. Toss in a pulse-pounding climax, and Heider has a promising potential series on her hands.” —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

“The Neapolitan setting and the details of underwater investigation give Heider’s debut an offbeat and entertaining gloss . . . A lively procedural with a high-powered heroine and a setting that would be idyllic if not for those murders.”

—*Kirkus Review*

“*May the Wolf Die* . . . bowled me over with its descriptions of Naples—seedy, beautiful, baroque—and the trials and tribulations of its main character, Nikki Serafino.” —*New York Times Book Review*

Penguin Random House, the world's largest trade book publisher, is dedicated to its mission of nourishing a universal passion for reading by connecting authors and their writing with readers everywhere. The company, which employs more than 10,000 people globally, was formed on July 1, 2013, by Bertelsmann and Pearson, who own 75 percent and 25 percent, respectively. With nearly 275 independent imprints and brands on five continents, Penguin Random House comprises adult and children's fiction and nonfiction print and digital English- and Spanish-language trade book publishing businesses in more than 20 countries worldwide. With over 15,000 new titles, and close to 800 million print, audio and eBooks sold annually, Penguin Random House's publishing lists include more than 80 Nobel Prize laureates and hundreds of the world's most widely read authors.