

T.D. Swanbeck's debut novel The Alligator Curse

A comic nightmare in the Louisiana swamp becomes a Southern Gothic race through family secrets, LGBTQ+ themes and the courage to live as your true self.

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Bucky Nonsense wakes up on his houseboat with a hangover he can almost explain and a problem he cannot. Sometime in the night, he turned into an alligator. He is twenty-two, fresh out of LSU and reasonably sure this is not how adulthood is supposed to start. He cannot work on an iPhone with alligator toes. He has to drink beer out of a lettuce keeper. Most urgent of all, he has no idea how long he has before the change becomes permanent.



That unforgettable morning opens *The Alligator Curse*, the debut novel from [T.D. Swanbeck](#), published December 23, 2025 by Prime Book Publisher. The book is part fantasy thriller, part Southern Gothic mystery and part coming-of-age journey. Under the swamp magic is a question with real bite: what happens when a family curse forces you to confront the parts of yourself the world tried to bury?

A RACE AGAINST TIME, TOLD FROM INSIDE THE SWAMP

With his father, his girlfriend and an unlikely crew of allies, Bucky sets out to reverse the curse before it becomes permanent. What starts as a search for a cure pulls him into a century of buried family history, the kind every family has and most would rather leave alone. The deeper he digs, the more he learns about the people who came before him and the more he has to reckon with who he is now.

The curse is not just a strange transformation. It is tied to the hidden truths earlier generations had to bury to survive. Swanbeck threads Bucky in present-day New Orleans with voices from the early twentieth-century South, building a story about LGBTQ+ identity, racism, classism, chosen family and the right to live outside the roles handed down by others. The journey moves through the Garden District, the Wards and secret places in the bayou, held together by Mama Ruby, an ageless bayou matron readers are not likely to forget.

Your past does not define your future. That's all up to you. - T.D. Swanbeck

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

The book began with a fever dream in 2024, vivid enough that Swanbeck told her husband about it the next morning. He told her to write it down. What started as a strange what if grew teeth and became a way to examine expectations, stereotypes and limits placed on people in the early twentieth-century South who only wanted to live on their own terms.

It also became something more personal. Swanbeck started the draft shortly before her mother passed, then leaned into it afterward as she worked through what the loss meant for her own life. The Alligator Curse is dedicated to her memory. The moment her characters realize they hold their own agency mirrors her own reckoning that her past did not have to decide her future.

I want my book to inspire readers to be happy living their truths. Maybe Bucky, or his story, will connect with you, or at least make you laugh. - T.D. Swanbeck

KAFKA BY WAY OF A LOUISIANA BAYOU

Swanbeck describes the book as Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* blended with *Dude, Where's My Car?*, funny, unsettling and grounded in the ordinary friction of real life even while a man is walking around in alligator skin. It touches LGBTQ+ themes, racism, classism and the secrets families keep, but it never turns into a lecture. The voice is honest, emotional and sharply sarcastic.

Fans of Jim Butcher will find a merry band of misfits. Fantasy readers will be drawn to Mama Ruby and the mystical edge of the bayou. Historical fiction readers will appreciate the flashback scenes set in the Garden District, the Wards and the hidden corners of the early twentieth-century South.

What makes it different is simple: it is the only story about what happens when a man wakes up as an alligator and has no idea why. It is written for readers who like their fantasy with weight, their mysteries with humor and their heroes a little lost before they find their footing.

I never set out to write a fantasy thriller. But when you turn a guy into an alligator in a setting like New Orleans, there's bound to be some magic and mystical characters lurking on the fringes of the plot. - T.D. Swanbeck

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

T.D. Swanbeck was born in Thailand and raised in Oklahoma, and her writing carries the mix of both. A world traveler who has lived in Jamaica, she holds a Master's degree in Journalism and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Music from the University of Oklahoma. Over the years she has worked

in publishing, the oil industry and staffing, fields she describes as excellent places to study people in different environments.

A longtime reader of Anne Rice since her college days, she has always been drawn to New Orleans as a city full of mystery and magic, which made it the natural home for Bucky's story. Today she runs a dog-training business, writes late into the night and counts her roles as wife, mother and caretaker of too many beloved pets among her favorites. She is a professional dog trainer of ten years, an ABCPDT professional and an AKC Certified Evaluator. The Alligator Curse is her debut novel, with Book Two of the series scheduled for Fall 2026.

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