

Grey Pine

by T. Lloyd Winetsky

Book I in the [American Teachers Series](#)

*A series with backstories that reveal bitter cynicism
and uplifting idealism in American education.*

Based on real events, *Grey Pine* is a gripping story of one man's struggle to survive amidst the chaos of the forces of nature and the inner workings of a troubled mind.

On May 18, 1980, the eruption of Mount Saint Helens captured the attention of America. The communities east of the Cascade Mountains were woefully unprepared for the devastation and disruption that followed, transforming for many a bright spring day into a murky, twenty-hour night. *Grey Pine* is the story of Phillip Stark, a bright and innovative young science teacher who attempts to treat the ash fall as an opportunity for experiment and wonder, but who is constantly thwarted by the resulting havoc in the community, and his own personal demons. As his health declines, his relationships suffer. The chaotic and often dangerous situations with his alcoholic father, irksome neighbor, unreliable girlfriend, and strained friendships derail any attempt to regain control of his life. All the while the omnipresent ash from the volcanic eruption acts as a symbolic reminder of his oppression and inability to break through.

Grey Pine is a gritty account of post-Vietnam America that chronicles social ills that are not unfamiliar to us in the present day: youth suicide, clinical depression, racial tension, alcoholism, and the malaise from an unpopular war. Phillip must find a way to maintain his sanity and strength to move past the obstacles created by the forces of nature—both those from without and within.