



Elegy Beach

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It's been twenty-seven years since the Change. An entire generation has grown up in the ruins of their parents' world. They've never known electricity or large crowds, but they take a new set of physical laws and a depopulated world for granted—until something threatens to change things back.

ELEGY BEACH—a novel of reunions and departures, the joy of discovery and the pain of loss.

Elegy Beach Details

Date : Published November 3rd 2009 by Ace Books (first published October 13th 2009)

ISBN : 9780441017959

Author : Steven R. Boyett

Format : Hardcover 375 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Apocalyptic, Post Apocalyptic, Science Fiction, Urban Fantasy, Fiction

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From Reader Review Elegy Beach for online ebook

Aryn says

Fred has grown up in a post-Change world. Magic has become a new tool for protection as well as for trinkets - but no one really understands the way it works. It's all part of the trading world that has become the commerce industry. He is 17 and apprenticed out to the resident caster, but he feels as though he has more talent than PayPay is allowing him to use. His best friend, Yan, is learning casting from Fred, but they're also going further and faster than PayPay would have allowed. They have a theory that magic is the science of the post-Change world. that it's similar to programming a computer, in that there is a language that the universe understands.

I really like the way magic is approached in this novel. It makes the very vague Change from the first book make a little bit more sense. They explain that somewhere in the world at 4:30 on the day of the Change, something - we don't know what - happened that changed the laws of physics. As the world rotated into that spot in the universe, the whole of the world changed. Some of the old rules of the world still applied, like gravity, but for the laws of physics just changed in such a way that magic became the new science. It became the new reality. I really like this approach. The author gets big props for this after how randomly vague the first book was. This was still vague, but in a more thoughtful, thought out approach.

Yan at one point in the novel is offended by what PayPay says, and burns down his shop. Finding this out, Fred kicks him out of town. This is when Ariel, the unicorn, returns. She has a story of caster who killed her mate, which from the kind of magic that was done, Fred assumes it was Yan. With Pete, Yan's father, and of course Ariel they head out to find and stop Yan. Finding his grimoire, Fred learns that what Yan really wants to do with the power that he has discovered is reverse the Change, in effect killing Ariel and all the supernatural creatures that came with her.

This book in some ways is leaps and bounds better than Ariel, in that it had a much juicier plot and it was less skittish about sex. It seemed like a much more grounded novel, even though it wasn't any less fantasy-driven. However, do you have any idea how difficult it is to read a book when the author doesn't always use question marks. It's hard to tell what is a question, versus a statement. Isn't it. He used them sometimes, but damn it was difficult to read other times.

A fun read, for sure, better than Ariel, but not really anything special at the same time.

Mr. DeLay says

The sequels are never as good as the original. In the case of "Elegy Beach", I'm tempted to make an exception. It has the punch of the original (familiar characters return) with a new cast of magicians and nefarious gangsters of the Rasputin kind. There are some great moments in this book that when you reach them it's like a old friend stopping in for a chat over tea. Much of this tome feels like that and it's a welcome feeling.

The are moments of friendship rekindled, fears reborn and ultimately the question of returning everything to normal runs center to the end of this story. Instead of bashing you head in with the ideas it allows you to think on your own as the drama plays out as you read. I had a hard time deciding if the events had happened to me...what would I do?

Would I inspire to restart the industrial revolution in favor of the magical one that was now shaping the earth from coast to coast? It's a pretty fun question and the book exacts its point fairly cleanly. I enjoyed the ending as it gives us hope and a happy ending. It doesn't shy away from the reality of life and what it means.

I enjoyed it and would pick it up again to read through all the things I enjoyed and even some that I may have missed.

Cissa says

It was a page-turner, and the world was better thought-out and/or described than it was in "Ariel".

There were some authorial mannerisms, though, that started annoying me early on and got increasingly irritating as they went on and on and on. The worst was the lack of question marks after most questions, both in dialog and in interior monologue. Did he think this was a clever trick when used over and over and over again. Did he think it added to the uniqueness of the voices when pretty much everyone did it. Was it the goal to make it seem like everyone spoke and the narrator thought in a robotic monotone. -Et cetera.

Combined with sentence fragments that could well have been crafted into actual sentences... well the voice was grating early on and just got worse.

Decent plotting, reasonably well-thought-out world, poor characterization, and really annoying voice; obviously, my personal take on it.

Denise Burchard says

I'm so glad I had read Ariel first (about a year ago). I didn't realize this was the sequel until I was quite a ways into it, I just thought it was another book by the same author. What a great story!

Checkman says

3.5 STARS

I read *Ariel* in the fall of 1985. I was a high school senior that year and I had recently finished Stephen King's post-apocalyptic classic (it probably *wasn't* considered a classic in 1985) *The Stand* . Both books made an impression on me and I can remember reading them like it was yesterday instead of thirty-three years.

"The Stand" I have since re-read multiple times, but not "Ariel". I did write a review a few years ago of "Ariel" in which I stated that I did not want to return to the book since I was concerned that the fond memories would be dashed by the passing years. However *Elegy Beach* was a different story and I actually found myself want to revisit Pete and Ariel and see how the passing years have treated them. However, initially, I found myself with a twenty-something who wasn't doing much of anything.

Once again the narrator is a young man in his early twenties, but this times it's Pete's son, Fred. Approximately twenty five years have passed since the events in "Ariel" and a generation has come of age

that has never known anything, but the world after *The Change*. Pete is now a middle-aged man with all the baggage that one accumulates while his son doesn't care about the world that used to exist and is ready to get on with his life.

Since it's been several decades since I read the first book I can't say if the sequel is more sophisticated, but I suspect it probably is. Steven Boyett wrote "Ariel" when he was in his late teens and early twenties (first couple years of college). Others have remarked that in many ways "Ariel" reads like a Young Adult book and that makes sense. He was a young adult when he wrote it so it's going to have that perspective and attitude. By the time he got around to writing *Elegy Beach* he was in his Forties. Decades of life are going to color ones perspective and one's writing is going to become more textured and complex. Life has a way of doing that to people.

In the afterword Boyett writes that initially Pete and Ariel were going to just be supporting characters to Fred, but that approximately halfway through writing the book Pete and Ariel's story joined Fred's story. It's this joining that gives the novel the star and a half. When Pete and Ariel step in the book finds it's footing. It isn't bad, but it isn't as interesting when it's just Fred. His story lacks the adventure that that has made "Ariel" such a favorite. Fred has no familiar to interact with and he comes across as a bit of a slacker (I'm now Fifty so forgive me for sounding like a curmudgeon) trying to find his way. Not really all that engrossing until the elders get involved and then things start to pop.

"Elegy Beach" is an ok book that gets better at the halfway point. It tends to drag at first , but gets better. I was happy to re-visit the world of "The Change" and enjoyed it. One can't go home again, but you can go back for a short visit and have coffee with your old friends. A few hours isn't such a bad thing.

S. K. Pentecost says

Steven Boyett crapped all over a piece of remarkable luck with this book. Ariel was a work of forgivable self indulgence. Or maybe it was celebratable for its self indulgence: the inescapable self indulgence of a child.

With its title, I was hoping *Elegy Beach* would have been written by a grown up, but I don't take away any sense of maturity from the story. Spoiled. Entitled. Self important. Those are the words that bubble up in my gut at the end of last page.

This is a sequel written less out of love and more out of resentment, and it's terribly disappointing.

Michael says

I think the forewards and afterwards to this and *Ariel* are required reading. These books are such intimate works by Boyett, this novel is essentially a grown-up reflection on the adolescent dreams and feelings of the first one.

One thing that isn't entirely clear to me is why (spoiler!) reversing the Change is automatically considered a bad thing. Reading this, that wasn't axiomatic at all. For one thing, all of the magic users ply their craft literally on the ashes of the old world (propane stoves, for example). They might seem to have to have it made right now but sooner or later that stuff is going to run out, and then what? It seemed to me that the only reasons not to attempt reversing the Change were because 1) Fred's generation didn't like the idea and it would be a big adjustment for them and 2) Ariel and other improbable creatures would wink out of existence.

Maybe I was too sympathetic to Old Pete but neither one of those things seemed like particularly difficult sacrifices to make.

Shelby says

This book and its companion Ariel. How to explain them. Centaurs and unicorns and werewolves, oh my. Ok, so fantasy. Wait, no, it's apocalypse. No, crime drama. Um, high fantasy. Oh, coming of age tale. How do you mix all this together? This author somehow successfully manages it. Highly enjoyable books. Zaza

Jen says

Boyett's novel 'Ariel: A Book of the Change' has haunted me since the day I finished reading it. I've read and re-read it several times over the years, and at the oddest times I'll wonder "What ever happened to Pete? Where did Ariel go? Will they ever see each other again?" In Elegy Beach I have all my answers and I'm... conflicted. I mean, Pete was as I expected him to be... cold, hard, bitter, and yet somehow still the Pete we knew and loved. The plot itself is decent, but really incidental. This story is the closure we never got with Ariel. The author says as much in his note at the end. And that's fine... great, in fact. Because that's what I've been haunted by for the past three decades... how things turned out for our two favorite characters. This is the closure I've always wanted. I think what disappointed me the most (and there are **** spoiler ahead here, so be warned****)... was Ariel. She seemed devoid of most of the emotion she exhibited in the first book. In some instances, she seemed downright cold. She wouldn't heal Pete or, as far as I could tell, even try to ease his pain. She didn't seem to care when the group drove through the "Change bubble" where the old laws still worked, and Avy came out of the other side changed, a part of herself missing. Hell, Ariel didn't even seem all that emotional about the death of her partner. Her sole purpose in going after Yan seemed to be revenge. And perhaps maybe self-preservation in the event he succeeded and the old laws of nature returned. Still... I enjoyed the book and was relieved to finally have closure. I won't be at the grocery store anymore and randomly think... damn, what happened after the events in New York? So there's that. And it's really a good story. So... four stars. Ariel got five, but then it's one of my all time favs. Well done Boyett, and thanks for putting my mind at ease, even if it took thirty years.

Incidentally, if anyone can explain the exchange at the end between Fred and Ariel, about Mila and the non-existent dog, I'd be grateful. I didn't get the cryptic message, I guess. Was there a dog, or wasn't there a dog? Was it even about the dog? Someone help a sister out.

Chuck Ledger says

I did not read 'Ariel', so I came into this novel with no knowledge of "the change". The story was good, but about 100 pages too long. I'm generally a fast reader, but parts of the book just seemed to linger on...and on...and on.... I found the magic concept very interesting and would love to see it explored in another work.

Amanda says

First, in terms of style, this book was a little disappointing. I understand it's a first-person account from a 17 year old, but some of the dialogue was just so horrible! And there were some confusing parts. Perhaps they were supposed to be ambiguous because our narrator is not fully matured yet or whatever, but it was weird. As a reader, I just found those moments a little bit discordant.

Second, the content was actually pretty good. It was an interesting take on a post-apocalyptic world, where technology has stopped working almost entirely and magic has displaced it. Obviously, Boyett is arguing that magic and technology can't fully coexist with each other. Or, perhaps, humans and technology and magic can't fully coexist with each other. You see this more with Yan's horrible desire to combine the two. In any case it made for a very Book of Eli setting. There are wide expanses of wild land and then small, but intense concentrations of people. As well as the usual wandering bandits, riffraff, and crazies of course.

It's also interesting that there is the theme of entitlement. Pre-Changers, the people who remember the world as we know it, are struggling with the next generation, trying to inspire in them the pioneering spirit that so characterizes the human race. At one point, Pete argues that all the next generation is ever going to aspire to is living in the carcasses of the last. I think it's an apt description for the upcoming generations now. We're losing the ability to appreciate what came before us. I feel like a lot of the younger kids aren't fully understanding the impact of the Civil Rights Movement or the Vietnam War.

But I think the strongest theme in the book is the acceptance of loss. Constantly, these characters are having to deal with loss. The loss of life as they knew it, the loss of friends, sons, fathers, the loss of innocence. Not all of it is dramatic or intense or even remarked upon. Sometimes, it's just time moving on while people are struggling to just stay in place.

But seriously, a smart-ass unicorn? Sorry, but it was kind of annoying. Then again, I'm not really that accepting of characters like that at all, even if she weren't a mythical, immortal creature who is usually portrayed as beautiful and wise.

N.K. Jemisin says

Magnificent and worthy sequel to Boyett's cult classic Ariel. Boyett's grown as an author in the time since, and he tries some experimental things here that I don't always like, but which effectively convey how much the world has been transformed by the Change. I love the tension between the children of the Change and those of the old world, and wish Fred (the protagonist) had fought harder to show his father that the new world was pretty kickass too. Most interesting scene, IMO, was the magical "rave" that the kids had developed, showing that the world's shift to magic need not revert it to medieval cliché; these are still 21st century people, just dealing with a different kind of tech. This whole "magic as new technology" theme got carried through the story in really innovative, sometimes frightening ways.

In fact, the only weakness of the story was the reunion of Pete and Ariel, because both characters had changed so much, grown so bitter with their troubles, that they sort of weighed the story down. Like watching the reunion of old lovers who've grown apart -- never fun to see, and a little depressing. Worse, they served as a constant distraction from other relationships that I wanted to see more of (Pete and Fred, Ariel and Fred, Fred and Yan). On the other hand, I was very glad to know what had happened to both characters after the previous book. So I'm not deducting any stars for that segment of the book, because it served its purpose. And because I'm wholeheartedly recommending this book anyway -- it's that good.

Also note: I think it would work well as a standalone, for those who haven't read Ariel.

Alan says

You don't need to have read *Ariel* first, not really; this is a sequel of sorts, but it's also a standalone novel (and one that happens to contain a quick synopsis of *Ariel* tucked away inside to boot). But I'd still recommend seeking out Boyett's first stab at the world of the Change anyway.

Elegy Beach is rightly named, though that fact doesn't really become apparent until later in the book. To start with, Fred is just a young apprentice in the sleepy Southern California coastal town of Del Mar, a thriving post-Change community that's gotten used to not having cars and electronic devices around anymore—the surfers even manage to ignore the sea serpents that mate just offshore, most of the time. Fred keeps busy in Mr. Papadopolous' shop, casting glammers and making potions, whipping up little unicorn-shaped homunculi to order for the town's sillier inhabitants. But that's before he and his friend Yan decide, as teenagers will, that the old folks are full of it, and determine to go about the practice of magic *systematically*, following logical principles that (you'd think) someone would have gotten around to trying long before.

This project, despite some stunning successes, does not go as well as Fred and Yan expect.

Though it was definitely readable before then, this book really didn't take flight for me until about Chapter Fifteen. One of Boyett's better techniques is writing sharp-edged banter, and it's not until then that we start getting exchanges like this one:

"I have the coffee."

"Your value to this expedition has already increased."

I found this ironic, since Boyett's Afterword in the 2009 edition of *Ariel* talks about how *that* book didn't get rolling until Ch. 10.

The flow of language in general is much smoother here than in *Ariel*—which is to be expected; Boyett wrote that one when he was 19, and if he'd learned nothing in the meantime, *that* would've been tragic. "Nowadays I write with the ear as well as the eye," Boyett says in the aforementioned Afterword, "for the rhythm of English is heard and not seen." He never quite gets up to the level of seemingly effortless lyricism that Peter S. Beagle sustains in *The Last Unicorn*, perhaps, but then very few books do.

A couple of things about *Elegy Beach* did annoy me, in fact. One that annoyed the *hell* out of me, and I don't know whether it was a stylistic choice or just some sort of bizarre search-and-replace error, was that there were almost no question marks in the book! Not that characters asked no questions... it's just that their questions were usually punctuated as statements. Repeatedly. Could you pass the salt. Where is Waldo. Please sir may I have another. And so on... What was Boyett thinking there. I dunno.

Another, lesser issue I had was with the inconsistencies (unnecessary ones, I think) between this book and its predecessor. In *Ariel*, the Change happened sometime in the 1980s... young Pete Garey uses a library's card catalog at one point, an action that now seems quaint, and other textual points make it even plainer that *Ariel*'s change is in our past. In *Elegy Beach*, though, the Change (must have) happened much, much later... music stores sold CDs, and at one point a *solar-powered* iPod appears—which, unless I'm very much mistaken, pushes the Change at least very slightly into our *future*!

I don't want this quibbling to put you off—in fact, I found *Elegy Beach* to be an engrossing and satisfying read, just about all the way through, and when it starts living up to its name there are poignant passages of sheer beauty, stirring events and dramatic confrontations and, yes, more snappy banter. It suffers only in

comparison with the unattainable ideal image of itself that I'd had before I started reading, a unicorn of a book which now, older and more scarred by the world, I cannot seem to touch.

Nancy says

I cried so many tears in the last 50 or so pages of this book, its amazing I didn't pass out from dehydration. A worthy sequel to one of my favorite books of all time.

Jonathan says

I first read Ariel A Book of the Change a year ago. "What a wonderful world Mr. Boyett has written for himself," I thought, "I hope he does something else with it." Well, this long awaited sequel to Ariel does not disappoint. The author's writing style has certainly matured over the years without losing its sense of innocence and wit. There is an alarming tendency in the fantasy genre for a series set in the same world with characters that carry over from episode to episode to gradually become less satisfying the farther the series goes. I'm not sure if this is due to the reader getting past the honeymoon phase with the characters or world, or maybe that some authors get a little, ummm, comfortable with their characters and plot arcs and archetypes etc. Boyett walks a fine line here, with enough nostalgia to satisfy those who just wanted Ariel 2: Revenge of the Unicorn, while still covering some new ground.

However, I do have a few minor quibbles that knocked my rating down a bit. **CAUTION: HERE BE SPOILERS!** The Change originally seemed to be dated to the publication of the original book in 1983 TO ME, yet there are Starbucks and iPods in sections. A case can be made for the Change to have happened in 2000, or 5 years in the future, or whenever, but stil, and I repeat this is just a personal opinion, it proved a bit of a bump in my suspension of disbelief when I got to those points. Yes, I know what you are thinking, talking unicorn, no problem, but an iPod lost in time and I'm put off? That's why it's a minor quibble.

Quibble the Second: Bob. Really? The character is fine, just his introduction and subsequent integration into the party seemed really, really forced and magicked. It felt as though Boyett might have written himself into a corner, and hoped we wouldn't notice the big bootprints of awkwardness that led to the next room as we passed through to get to the really good stuff. Other than that though, he was, errr, ok. I guess.

Quibble C: Little heavy on the foreshadowing with Pete. Was not surprised or startled at all, and almost said, "finally..." to myself towards the end.

As I said before, all minor, some probably imaginary on my part, I forgive you, Steve. **HERE ENDETH THE SPOILERS**

If I had the option, I would have given this book a 4.5, but since there are no half stars I will have to say a 4. I don't read a whole lot of fantasy, but the few that I do manage to read are awfully good, as was this. There is enough backstory given in the book to read it cold, but I recommend you go read Ariel first, especially since Ace published a nice paperback reissue not too long ago, and some of the funnier touches are better appreciated with it fresh in your mind.

One last little note: I noticed Cory Doctorow did a blurb for the book, and while I know he covered Steven Boyett on Boing Boing for both his writing and his podcasting (he does Podrunner, if ya didn't know), I can't help but think that he only did it because Disneyland is mentioned. J/K Cory.

