



# Alternity

*Mari Mancusi*

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## **Alternity** Mari Mancusi

Imagine waking up in a post-apocalyptic, nightmare world--and being told your whole life is but a dream. Skye Brown thought she was your typical teen--good grades, hot boyfriend, and an afterschool job that pays her to play videogames. But then she started having the dreams.

In her dreams, there is no Earth. Only Terra, a bleak, underground wasteland where people live in squalor and oppression. In her dreams, there is no Skye--only Mariah, a rebel leader fighting against a vile, dystopian regime. And then there's Dawn, a handsome, but haunted soldier who sees her as but an empty shell of the girl he once love--a betrayer he vows to hate forever, despite what she sees deep in his eyes.

Now, ripped between Dark Siders and club kids, the mundane and the mystic, Skye finds herself in a fight against time--to learn who she really is, where she belongs..and why. The shocking truth will have her questioning her own reality...and her heart.

## **Alternity Details**

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## From Reader Review Althernity for online ebook

### Paranormal Romance says

Plagued by vivid and startling nightmares, the heroine hasn't had a decent nights sleep for so long she thinks she's going crazy. To further this notion, she sees the man responsible for her nightmares at the club one night and the next thing she knows, she's waking up in a white room. Confused and scared, she finds herself in a laboratory of sorts with only the message of 'Don't trust Duske. Find Dawn' as her guide. There's no way this world she's in is reality but suddenly everything seems so real. So, listening to her instincts she calls the number given to her with the message and next thing she knows she's meeting up with a strange man in an alleyway. A beautiful and startlingly haunted man who seems torn between hating her and desiring her. To top it off, he seems adamant in the notion that she is this Mariah woman, the love of his life and also the woman who betrayed him and the rebellion. The woman who gave up her comfortable life with the elite to fight for the rights of the poor and helpless. No matter how hard she protests being this other woman both he and the villagers are positive she is their rebel leader returned to guide them towards victory in their war against the oppressive government. Weirder out and frightened to see images of Mariah with the hero's features, she willingly allows herself to be captured by the soldiers who come searching for her. Convinced by the slimy politician that she's a visitor from earth to their world, she takes his offer to return to her home- even if it means gathering pictures for him and coming back to Terran. Waking up in her apartment, knowing that everything is back to normal- that the visit to the war torn world (while not a dream as she had hoped) is just a memory. Yet when she returns to give her pictures to Duske, she is started by just how shifty the whole situation is. Overhearing talk of just how gullible she is to believe she's from earth, the heroine accepts the aid of a woman of the rebellion and escapes the facility. Wounded and frightened with no where else to go or anyone to trust, she immediately seeks out the hero. Despite his anger over her perceived betrayal it's plain to see that he's still madly in love with Mariah. And he can't be persuaded to think of the heroine as anyone other than this warrior woman. The heroine herself begins to doubt her true reality. She and this Mariah woman are carbon copies of each other. The heroine instinctively knows how to wield a sword and she can't explain why she feels such a deep connection with the tortured hero despite their short acquaintance. But there's no way she's destined to lead this group to victory against the government. Yes, she's appalled by the living conditions these people suffer in, the fact that they receive little to no food and are slowly killing themselves in the mines- but she's not Mariah, she's not a leader. And whatever connection or desire the hero may feel towards her is just a projection of his love for Mariah, not for her. And it's for these reasons that she once again breaks the hero's heart, crushes the rebellions hopes and returns back to earth. Yet suddenly home is not feeling like home. She can't stop this feeling that this is all a lie and when she receives word that the government has decided to kill and rebels, she's doesn't hesitate to return to Terran once again and this time it's for good. She may still doubt her identity but there's no doubt that these people need a savior and with the hero's help she determined to give it to them. Though this is listed as an action romance, there wasn't much in the way of action. It was very fantasy driven with a lot of similarities to total recall. I understood the heroine's doubt and cowardice for most of the book because, hey, who the hell believes they are actually a freedom fighter from another world? Yet that didn't stop me from wanting to shake her and tell her to wake up! My goodness I adored the hero though. He was everything good and vulnerable and so damn tormented. A gentle giant. A man created in a lab yet managed to love deeper than a man could ever love a woman. And even though he was hurt and betrayed by what Mariah did as well as the heroine's reluctant to want to remember who she is, this didn't stop him from loving her and feeling joy every time she came back to him. Though this was a complicated story with clones, war, mutants and virtual reality, I was able to follow along quite easily and everything was explained in detail. Lots of fantasy but it had true heart as well.

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## **Katy says**

How to I review this book without spoiling it? Overall, I basically struggled with this book until the last quarter, at which point, I was totally sucked in for a bit.

The prologue was really interesting and makes you want to know what's going on. But then the first part of the book throws you into the daily life of a typical teenage college girl. It was a bit weird because even though Skype detected some odd behavior, I find it a little hard to believe that she JUST noticed them out of her 18 or 19 years. And why is she all of sudden having nightmares?

Then Skye is thrown into the world of Terra, and underground wasteland where people are struggling to survive. Mancusi may have attempted at world-building, but the little she did give us did not stretch far beyond your typical dystopian setting with an oppressive government and rebels wanting to start a revolution.

So the first half of the book pretty much dragged, and honestly, I kept waiting for Mancusi to explain to us what the heck was going on. The second half began to become a bit more interesting as we find out who Mariah is and what role she plays in the revolution.

However, it wasn't until the last quarter or so with Mancusi's big twist that the story really blew me away, and I was able to see, in hindsight, how everything fell into place.

Having said that, after the big explanation, I think the book did slack off a bit. It was almost as if Mancusi tried so hard to jam pack the big reveal, and then she was in a rush to tie it all together with the ultimate plan. I was a bit disappointed how that turned out, though I want to make a note that it was quite possibly that (view spoiler) And I also felt the final showdown was a bit too simple and maybe even too easy.

Like I said, the epiphany was quite mind-blowing for me, and I wish the rest of the book had been more interesting before and after the fact. I think if Mancusi introduced the concept a little sooner (say halfway through, if not earlier), and if she had taken more time to build on it for a solution other than their quick plan, it would have been so much more intriguing.

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## **Syahira Sharif says**

Skip to the end if its too long for you.

Alternity is about a normal girl named Skye. She studies in a course that she love, in a university that she love, doing a dream job as a beta tester for Sims Medieval/WoW game called 'RealLife : Medieval Times' and have a boyfriend who is a DJ for the hottest club called Luna. But she's plagued with horrific nightmares of someone chasing after her and calling her by a very different name and wanted her to stop "chasing the moon".

One night, she was lead to a VIP room in Luna where she found herself waking up to a futuristic underground world called Terra where everyone thinks she is Mariah, a daughter of one of the Circle of Eight, an influential girl and beloved among the Terrans and also a leader of the rebellion, Eclipsers, against their oppressive government.

In my own word, Altermity is a love-child of every scifi novels, movies and tvseries that I enjoyed like Fringe, Matrix, Terminator, City of Ember, (tiny tiny bit) The Hunger Games, Inception and Dollhouse. If you love these things, I like you already.

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## **Characterization : 5 Reasons Why I Love Skye Brown**

### **1# She's a Geek**

At the start of the book, I do admit shamelessly that I beginning to like her because she's a gamer and kept Luke, Katniss and Harrison Ford (Deckard) poster in her dorm.

I don't know why but if I found when I read a character who enjoyed playing computer games like me, girls or ladies or grandmothers who played games that I like and played it like me, I immediately form insta-attachment to them. Fictional or non fictional. True story.

Earlier in the chapters, Skye worked part-time as a beta gamer for a female-centric company. There's the argument that some online games can be male-centric and even young boys can be aggressive and trollish to female gamers online which I can relate to. I did play WoW once but I tend to like offline RPG more than MMORPGs since I dont have to focus too much on leveling up or forming a factions and I can concentrate on with the quests and storylines.

Actually, Mari Mancusi my kind of "Felicia Day". I think everyone knows who is Felicia Day right... well to me Mari is an equivalent of that... mostlye because she wrote Blood Coven and created my twin Rayne. Yep, you're welcome.

### **2# To Mary Sue or not Mary Sue**

*The prototypical Mary Sue is an original female character in a fanfic who obviously serves as an idealized version of the author mainly for the purpose of Wish Fulfillment. She's exotically beautiful, often having an unusual hair or eye color, and has a similarly cool and exotic name. She's exceptionally talented in an implausibly wide variety of areas, and may possess skills that are rare or nonexistent in the canon setting. She also lacks any realistic, or at least story-relevant, character flaws — either that or her "flaws" are obviously meant to be endearing.*

*From tvtropes.org on "Mary Sue"*

I have a hate-love situation with Mary Sues in Young Adult books. I do take time off trying to avoid reading YA because it is very frustrating when you're switching to another book and... \*heavy sigh\* its the same person all over with similar conflict and same sexual tension and triangle loves. But I kept reading it anyway.

I do admit, the first part of the novel, Skye is quite a typical archetypal character. A college student who suddenly get suck into a dystopian world. Kinda like a bunch of escapism novels and characters that exist in fictions and anime around us.

It's not a bad thing to do archetypal character. But because it's overused by every author in millions of books, even I was a bit pessimistic...

But its THE Mari Mancusi. You never know what she will do.

And most of the time, I was right about her....

'Predictability' is never was one of Mari Mancusi's M.O.

But for the first half of the book, I was really annoyed by Skye.

I was fine for a couple of chapters and I was emphatic with her when I saw that she's been having these nightmares and then flash forward to her life with her friends and studies.... and she got herself into an 'Alice in Wonderland' situation.

I think she got into a culture shock or something while in Terra. I know that she was forced to be in a place where it is weird similar but different and she became really scared about it especially when everyone seemed to act like they know her but she didn't.

She's literally started to beg Dawn and then Senator Duske just so that she could go back to her idea of normalcy.

Honestly, I had this horror movie violin scratching in my ear whenever she went 'moon gazing'. Even after Dawn warned her about her medication and told her the truth about it, she didn't listen! And it can be frustrating like watching someone playing Slender Game or something.

But then, like a good story progression, she goes through a metamorphosis effect where Skye started to get suspicious with things, investigate, educate herself with things that people kept her away from, developing newer thoughts and ideas. Wondering whether some things in her reality are fiction or reality and what will she do about it.

Overall, she started as a basic character until she developed into a better person.... and if you continue on reading, you'll be surprised by her character because not everything is as it seems.

### **3# Identity Confusion**

If you know me at least for more than a year, I am a total Fringe free\*ough\*fan. Remember how Olivia Dunham got kidnapped and replaced with another alternate version of Olivia Dunham (view spoiler) well... Alternity is sort of like that...

When Skye found out that she resembled greatly to Mariah and that everyone thinks she's Mariah and insisted multiple of times that she is Mariah, Skye literally flipped.

Mariah is a daughter of a Terran Senator and is considered as a royalty as she is a descendent of the Circle of Eight (the founder of Terra) and she is beloved by everyone in Terra until she started a rebellion against the government. A couple of months before this, she disappeared and their secret grand plan were sabotaged by the government and Dawn immediately assume that Mariah betrayed them and left them to her addiction.

When Skye showed up and suddenly being blamed for things she didn't do, recognized as another great person who looked like her, and where everyone insisting that Skye is just a fake personality... I do understand that she get scared and wanted to go home where everything make sense to her. I could totally empathize with Skye when wanted to stay away from the rest of the Terrans initially.

What can a person do when all identity that make you who you are is lies and that its just chemicals... and fiction!

Frankly, the struggle with Skye and her conflicting identity with Mariah made this book as somewhat similar to a psychological thriller which I like very much.

#### 4# "Strong Girl Character with a Sword" made right

*So much blood. So much death. All at my own hands.*

If you know me long enough, you'll know me and the Stormdancer thing. (shake head)

Finally I have a great 101 character example on "Strong Girl Character with a Sword" tropes.

Honestly, I think among the recent YA books with sword-wielding female characters in it, Skye is probably one of the best I've read.

In this book, Skye is having an identity confusion right? Similarly to Fringe's Olivia Dunham, both of them is embedded with the identity of the other person.. and also their skills. Olive with Fauxlivia's Olympic-level shooting skills and Skye with Mariah's pro-level swordsmanship. (view spoiler) In Alternity, while being attacked by some soldiers, Skye turned into Uma Thurman's "Kill Bill" The Bride and did a blood bath. Like a normal person covered in blood, she got sick, and scared. She didn't go kamikaze killing things because she can. Besides, how could a normal NYU student would react when she suddenly have killer moves?

Unlike some book, this book actually have pages of monologues questioning herself and wondering how on earth she could have these sword-wielding skills... and totally freaked out when she killed someone with it.

Alternity isn't about a girl becoming a strong character with a sword. It's about an ordinary girl becoming a strong character who happens to have skills with a sword and was freaked out about it.

The sword is an enhancement to the story. It can be worked into the world building, the plot and characterization. But it's **not** an accessory where you show it off to people in lengthy descriptions and promotion but never deliver.

In fact, I don't think Mari marketed this book using "a girl with a sword and trying to save the world from evil" as a sales pitch. Only the cover showing it. And honestly, I think she's more legit on it than Julie Kagawa's Immortal Rules.

But because of this, I don't think its a suitable reading for a very young audience because it does contain some part of violence and blood. However, if you read The Hunger Games and is okay with it, I think you'll be fine with this book.

#### 5# No instalove. No triangle love... but....

Actually, its more like Fringe triangle love with Olivia, Peter and Fauxlivia. I rarely find Female-Male-Female love triangle in YA unlike the usual Male-Female-Male triangle.

So, I can assure you, if you're sick of triangle two boys loving one girl book, you'll like this one better.

Dawn was Mariah's former boyfriend and he is the reason why Mariah choose to rebel against the Terran government. He love Mariah until she betrayed him and the rebels to the Circle. But his feelings for her never fade especially with his reaction when he first saw Skye for the first time.

Unlike Peter (view spoiler), Skye is quite sympathetic about Dawn's feeling for Mariah and in this book, its very obvious that Dawn is still struggling about it.

Of course, Skye doesn't want him to rebound his feelings to Mariah on her who is a version of Mariah.

Its complicated I know but when Mari wrote it, it made load of sense.

The whole idea in this book is making sure that the development of their relationship is natural and interchangeable as the plot goes around. Not because suddenly they have intense feeling to one another.

I really was impressed by the intensity of these two characters. I like it better when romance is written in this way since its far more romantic and effective.

Most of all, it doesn't read like its forced or abrupt just to fill some loose parts in the storyline. I could count on so many popular books that does exactly that.

and frankly, I had some high and low with Skye and Dawn but... at the end, this two is totally worth it. Just wait for it.

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*It's a guy- around my own age. Tall, lean and wearing a black leather trench coat and scuffed brown boots. His eyes are hidden behind mirrored shades and long layers of translucent platinum hair fall into his face, almost but not completely obscuring high cheekbones.*

First character description is like any other tall brooding guy but... then he became alive and each of the scenes seems to shine a lot brighter when he's around.

He have \*gasp\*, a) one chock full of angst. b) but the angst began to burst out of its seams amd you could see his vulnerability... c) then he's like, full of emotion for one guy because... d)... its love... love love love love...

Loyal. Passionate. Sensitive. Determined. Intelligent. Strong. Knows kung fu (ok.. not literally kung fu) and swordfighting. Handsome. Platinum blonde hair (oh.. Spike).. huggable... kissable... love animals.....  
\*asthmatic (hint) gasp\*

Sigh... in real life, people like this are **always** married..

**Plot-wise on Dawn** : It was only months after Mariah left him and its very interesting to see that he is still in pain and hurt because of it. And he blamed Skye naturally since he think Mariah is her who got her memory replaced by a memory serum.

I could see that he's trying to hate Skye but failed miserably (naturally). I do see his frustration and anguish



all rolled up in him whenever Skye open up her mouth or be around him or something. His awkwardness and shyness....

I don't know how I read this much from just words but its good. Kinda remind me of Jareth (Blood Coven) except less vampiric brooding and emoness and some Magnus's appeal, except Dawn is not a vampire and he can kick people asses literally.

He need to be read and enjoyed by everyone who like to see him suffer... like me.

## **Worldbuilding**

The culture, society and the geography of the story isn't that hard to understand to me but it's not without its flaws... if you analyse it too much and I don't want to.

Terra is a futuristic gigantic-scale underground settlement where the technology is much like the Capitol (THG) and is quiet similar to the latest Resident Evil : Retribution' settings of a gigantic city thriving underneath the surface. Unlike the setting in 'The City of Ember' where the underground city is governed by a powerful but weak mayor meanwhile Terra is governed by a Circle of Eight and they kept Terra at its leash and even impose drastic and inhumane methods to control their cities no matter if they're rich or poor or middle class.

A hundred years ago, a terrible war poisoned the surface and made it inhabitable. (Maybe neutron bomb?) Circle of Eight had built secret multiple underground cities under unused lands and they pick various people from around the world as refugees. The Circle of Eight became the government and the refugees became their people.

But the people of Terra became divided as the richest and powerful controlled the increasingly corrupt government. There were Independents or Indys, the free citizens with wealth who live in opulence and the 'working class' called Dark Siders were sent to a much further underground settlements in poor living conditions and restricted aids.

They were sent slaving in dangerous places like radioactive mines that affected the people including children who are born with genetic defects and mutations due to the radiation.

However, even the rich and the poor share the same plight of being under a corrupt regime. Although the Indys didn't receive bad treatment like the Dark Siders, they still received the other end of manipulation and oppression. The tone of the story at some point reminded me elements from the politics of The Hunger Games, Ray Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles and Huxley's Brave New World.

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Mari brought fresh elements into this story which is quite original in YA dystopian and is quite original among the genre. I shall attempt on her other YA dystopian which is "Tomorrow Land" since I love this one.

I'm not surprised that this dystopian world have managed to entice me. Its complicated like any other adult science fiction story and with more substance than most YA distopian these days that focus too much on drama and romance. There are some moments that I thought all over again about some of the scenes and the issues that the author wanted portray. But most of all, the storytelling is very effective on me.

Alternity is not just an escapism story about a girl trapped in a foreign world. It's a lesson in forgiveness and reality, the frailness of humanity against corruption, the unending circle of war and oppression. And of course, love that was lost and found in difficult situations for those who seek it.

This review ARC is supplied by the publisher via NetGalley and will be released in ebook form on 19th October 2012 by NLA Digital Liaison Platform LLC.

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## **Tracy says**

I've read this book at least 4 times. It's been kind of a comforting title to go back to when I wanted something light/romantic to read. Never thought of it as amazing, but it caused enough eye-rolling this time to perhaps permanently remove it from my reread pile. Skye whined too much this time. The plot twist was expected, and the end felt too convenient and rushed. The cultural references in hindsight are super obvious.

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## **Sarah says**

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to NLA Digital Liaison Platform LLC, and Netgalley.)

18-year-old Skye Brown goes to college in New York, and beta tests new video games for an all-female games company. She thinks that her worst problem at the moment is the strange nightmares that she's been having where she is chased through underground tunnels by strange men who want to capture her and inject her with weird green fluid, she's wrong.

Things are about to get a whole lot stranger for Skye as she finds herself in a strange underground place, and she's pretty sure she's not dreaming now. The only thing she knows is to find Dawn, and stay away from Duske, something that her personal trainer told her, and she has no idea how to do either of those things. Add to that the fact that people here seem to think that her name is Mariah, that she's a traitor, and that she's addicted to 'moongazing' drugs (which they seem to think her asthma inhaler contains), and she's in a whole heap of trouble!

Who is she really? Is she Skye, or is she Mariah? Did she really end up on earth and brainwashed by Duske, or is it just a case of mistaken identity? Are the drugs in her asthma inhaler really these 'moongazing' drugs? And why do people keep telling her to 'not look into the moon'?

This was an interesting story, with a whole other world (Terra) built on the edge of our reality. I felt about as confused as Skye at times, and could totally understand how she'd have a hard time being suddenly thrust into this whole other world and hailed as some kind of hero/traitor. I think she actually did pretty well to cope as well as she did, but she was also pretty clueless most of the time, and totally not the kick-ass heroine I was expecting.

I was in two minds over the people Skye met in Terra, and who she should and shouldn't trust. I thought that Dawn was a little unfair on her when she had absolutely no memory of her life as 'Mariah', whilst Duske just seemed to use her lack of knowledge to his advantage and continued to try and use her.

I liked the technology that they had in Terra with flying motorbikes, and I liked the way there was both a reason and consequence for living underground. I also liked how they called the escape routes 'rabbit holes',

and Skye's metaphor of 'feeling like Alice in Wonderland'.

I'm afraid I thought the twist at the end a bit far-fetched, and unbelievable, it kind-of cheapened the whole story, and I didn't like it. It really wasn't the twist that I would have picked, and it really spoilt the ending for me.

Overall; an interesting idea but it lacked excitement, and I didn't like the ending.

6 out of 10.

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### **Kristin says**

Look at that cover! Isn't it gorgeous?! Yes, I'm a cover-whore, and I would have totally grabbed the book if it wasn't already offered to me.

Its been awhile since I've read dystopian, so this was a good change of pace for me. The last dystopian book I read I was so disappointed in. This was a quick read that had me enamored from the first few pages. It didn't feel like a dystopian book since it kept going back and forth from reality to reality. Was it sci-fi, fantasy, dystopian? You didn't really know until the last 1/3 of the book.

The writing was phenomenal, I have absolutely nothing bad to say about it at all. There weren't any really slow parts to it, and it didn't go too fast. The story line, even with its twists was easy to follow. The twists were original and kept it fresh and interesting.

The ending was the only sort of disappointment. Could this continue on into a sequel? Yes. But at the same time, it closed enough where it could be a stand-alone book as well.

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### **Michele says**

Enter Skye Brown a video game designer that is having some highly realistic nightmares. Due to these dreams she is running on little sleep and caffeine. Which is starting to effect not only her love life but her work performance. Soon she finds that her dreams are based on a reality she would have only thought was possible in one of the fantasy books she likes to read. Soon she is asking who am I Skye or Mariah, where is home Earth or Terra, and who can she really trust Duske or Dawn.

Over all I enjoyed this book and read it pretty quickly. Mari pulled me in and held me captive. Which may make you wonder if I enjoyed it so much they why only 3 stars? The story I give 5 stars, it held me and I didn't want to put it down. The problem came with one big formatting error, where suddenly the last few sentences of the chapter appeared right in the middle of a word. Also a couple of times the wrong name was used, a few misspelling and at least have a dozen instances of I being used instead of I. I usually try not to let things like this effect my reviews but considering how long this book has been out I would think they should have been caught and fixed by now.

This is the second book of a series called Shomi. The first is Wired, they seem to be independent novels in

the science fiction romance genre.

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## **Falina says**

Moongazer is flat and dull and a painfully blatant rip-off of *The Matrix*. That isn't all I could say about this novel, but it's really all I want to say. It's not even that I feel angry or particularly disappointed about it -- I simply feel so indifferent to it that I can barely muster the energy to review it properly. Still, I'll give it a shot.

I was really excited about the possibilities of this novel -- the post-apocalyptic world! The dark angst-ridden love interest! The manga-esque cover! I was really hoping it would turn out to be like a grown-up version of L.J. Smith's *The Chosen* and/or *Huntress* with some cyberpunk thrown in.

However, the post-apocalyptic world turned out to be embarrassingly stereotypical and flat -- the mutated working class living sadly underground, their extra arms waving helplessly, as the evvvvvvil upper class takes advantage of them from their glitzy upper (but still underground) world. Earth as it once was is laid as virtual reality over the destroyed world, people tricked into the program by the upper class, eventually unaware of the real conditions of existence (sound familiar, *Matrix* viewers?). The revolutionary ideas would have been very interesting if only they had truly been examined, instead of used as a shallow plot device. The characters are cardboard cut-outs ("selfless revolutionary", "lower-class victim", "evil upper-class person"); even Skye, who has the benefit of essentially playing the role of two different people for most of the novel, and who is supposedly struggling to confront her two different sides, is a clear character type (the "real" person). Dawn, the hero, is sensitive, shy, and apparently stupid, rehashing the same issues over and over again (namely, "you're just a shell of the woman I once loved!"), and he doesn't even bother to use new dialogue when he does it. As for the eroticism in *Moongazer*, I will only say that this is the first book that I have EVER laid down in the middle of a sex scene (I went to sleep).

I think I could go on, but I don't feel like it. To quote Dawn, this book is an "empty shell" of what it could have been.

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## **Kayla says**

See the original review on [darkfaerietales.com/reviews](http://darkfaerietales.com/reviews)

Skye Brown is an ordinary human from an ordinary college with an ordinary boyfriend. So when her ordinary life is interrupted by a not-so-ordinary nightmare, she is more than a little shaken up. But just a few puffs of her inhaler and everything's back to normal. Then those dreams become reality... that's when she starts freaking out.

Skye Brown is transferred to Terra--a post-apocalyptic underground city that hides from the surface due to nuclear wars. There are three types of people in Terra--the Indys, the rich and oblivious; the Dark Siders, the workforce and rebellious and the nTs, the enhanced robotic humans that will someday replace the Dark Siders as the workforce. When Skye wakes up inside a room in Moongazer Palace (the "teleport" to Earth and back,) she's lost and confused, but remembers what her yoga instructor told her before she left Earth. Call Dawn. But Dawn sees her as someone else; in fact everyone thinks she's Mariah Quinn, rebel leader

extraordinaire. But Skye knows, she's from Earth--even Duske, one of the leaders of Terra (also the guy her yoga teacher told her NOT to trust,) calls her by her real name, Skye. But then her reality is flipped. She doesn't know who to believe or even who she is anymore. Is her inhaler really for asthma or is it a drug from Moongazing that she's addicted to? But she must help the Dark Sider's cause. It'll only take a day, right?

Talk about complex. Fans of Inception will love this action-packed thriller with worlds within worlds and a heroine who faults become her strengths. The plot was filled with twists and turns, action scenes and a few steamy romance scenes. Everything was fast-paced--although the romance was a bit on the too fast side.

Dawn was Mariah Quinn's loyal boyfriend--before he thought she betrayed the entire rebellion and sold him out to the government. He thought he was through with her and her Moongazer ways. But then Skye calls him from Moongazer Palace. And all those feelings come rushing back. At first Dawn is wary--Skye may look and act like Mariah, but she isn't the woman he fell in love with. But then Skye proves she's loyal to the cause. All of a sudden BAM they love each other. This was the only problem I had with the book. They know each other for about a day, she leaves, comes back, and now all of a sudden Dawn gets over his feelings for Mariah and Skye forgets her boyfriend on Earth. So much for loyalty.

But other than that lightning fast romance, this book has an amazing plot. It's so intricate and complex that I had no idea where the ending was going to be or how it would play out. Some of the smaller obstacles seemed to be easily side-stepped, but hey there were bigger and better obstacles to overcome later. Props to Mancusi for creating so much suspense in one book.

And let's talk about this one book deal. IT ENDS IN A CLIFFHANGER. It's not a major one. In fact it's the average dystopian cliffhanger with rebellions brewing but the hero and heroine are together. But there is no talk of a sequel in the future! There's so much potential for a whole series from this one idea! There are so many strings still hanging by the end of the book, it's hard not to imagine a sequel. So please, Mancusi, if you are reading this, PLEASE make another one!

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## **B. McMichael says**

For fans of dystopian novels this is a good read.

Is she Skye or is she Mariah? Skye finds herself waking up in a weird underground city only to have no recollections of it. It turns out that everyone else remembers her, but she doesn't remember this odd world or that she is part of the revolutionaries trying to overthrow it- or is she really?

I liked that the main character's identity didn't change- she stayed true throughout holding onto that she did not have amnesia. I found it odd that she did not cave in, but by the end you know why. While Skye does win in the end, she does so without killing the villain. So you are left wondering what happened to him. A villain so powerful does not just disappear.

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## Yolanda Sfetsos says

My gosh! Have I been having an awesome run with books, or what? This was AWESOME! I couldn't put it down. The world is bleak and keeps you guessing. It was sad, funny, happy and intriguing. There's a bit of everything in this one. And Dawn. Ah. What can I say? The connection between these two characters was inspiring.

Loved it!

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## Naoms says

Originally posted on Confessions of an Opinionated Book Geek

2.5 Stars

The synopsis of this book is interesting. It pulled me right in. I always think my life has to be a dream, well, a nightmare. The idea of Skye waking up and told her world was all fake, fascinated me. However, this book did not. "Alternity" has a really great plot and just a so-so execution.

Terra is a unique idea on the part of Mari Mancusi, the author. It is easy to imagine a world underground with its tunnels and upstairs, downstairs mentality. Still, there are many inconsistencies not only in the world, but also with the characters. The people in this story are caricatures. They are not flushed out or unique. Mancusi has an idea of what a love interest or villain should be and it doesn't matter if that idea does not fit in with her world. For example, Dawn is a dark sider who lives in what is described as a cave and scrambles to find food. Even with all that poverty, he wears a leather coat and rides a hover bike. How can he afford these luxuries while his neighbors drag around in rags? The master villain gossips his master plan over the phone and makes throat-slitting noises like a cartoon character. How is this guy supposed to put fear or urgency into the heart of readers?

"Alternity" is written as if Skye is talking directly to the reader. Most first person narration walks the line of 'the character is telling us a story' or 'we're observers in the character's head.' There are lines in this book like "not for the reasons you think" or "not in a romantic way, mind you," that gives the feeling that Skye is recounting the story to the reader over coffee and scones. I found that I liked this approach. It was almost as if Skye fell into the chair across from me at Starbucks and began telling a 'you will never guess what just happened to me,' story.

Skye spends a lot of time denying the beliefs of the people of Terra. That is understandable. Who would easily believe that their identity is false? For someone so stubborn and practical, it seems ridiculous how easily she believes everything else. A guy she's just met tells her she's no longer on Earth and she's just like ok, how do I get home? She doesn't demand proof or ask detailed questions. She just buys it. If she can easily believe she's on another world, why does she take so long to consider the other possibilities?

Skye insists that she has a life she has to get back to, no matter what. While on Terra, she never thinks about her boyfriend or her parents. Doesn't wonder how long she's been gone or if they are missing her. It's her

lack of any real emotion, besides pity for people who think of her as Mariah, that makes her impossible to relate to or empathize with.

There are bright moments between Skye and Dawn that are effortlessly charming. Their back and forth banter flows beautifully on the page convincing me that these are two people with great chemistry. Dawn is perhaps the saving grace of this book. Leather coat and hover bike aside, his feelings are portrayed very realistically. His happiness at seeing Skye and his hurt over her apparent betrayal, all seem honest. His emotional journey through this book, keeps you turning the pages.

Whenever the rules of the world become clear, the author throws a new aspect into the mix. The idea of a parallel underground world is twisty enough to deal with. Every new twist just adds too much. It becomes too scientific, too technical and over the top. It's like a sci-fi melodrama where no one is who they say they are and everyone is obsessed with Skye or has a deep dark past.

My biggest issue with this book is that the author really doesn't understand the behavior of characters she has written. Skye's boyfriend kisses her on the cheek and she is uncomfortable with what she calls PDA in the school. If the author believes that a kiss on the cheek in a college hallway is risqué she knows nothing about college students. Also, she references NYU film kids saying that they love "Citizen Kane" and look down on people who like "Star Wars." False, I graduated from NYU film school. I hate Citizen Kane, but love Star Wars. Any film kid who hasn't seen either of these movies would probably get scoffed at and then their friends would force them to watch the movies. These sections are very small parts of the book, but are apart of Skye's character build up. Authors should always do research, before adding specifics. You know what they say about people who assume.

This story runs at a slow pace until the end where two big twists are revealed. While I was vaguely surprised, it wasn't an OMG moment and it didn't improve the book for me. The character just kind of bounces around for a few chapters, while nothing really happens. This book is all about Skye and her struggle to discover who she is and what is real. Unfortunately it's all one note. She gains some ground, then turns around and does a complete 360. Her lack of progression as a character makes this book a bit of a struggle to get through.

I recommend it for someone looking for a quick and easy read. Also for dystopian, sci-fi lovers.

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## **Donna says**

### **How did we end up here?**

Mari has a tendency of sending me everything she writes, for which I don't complain. I merely consume it all and am happy to have received it for we are of one mind when it comes to how writing should read. Namely, good. Our brains, they mesh. Which probably explains why I have a habit of liking Mari's writing when I read it.

### **Okay, book. You've got 50 pages. Go!**

I immediately started trying to work the story out the second things started to get weird. I like books that do that: engage my brain and all. I thought I hooked onto the major issue early on but Mari had a tendency of making me second-guess myself which inherently made me angry. I'm not a fan of second-guessing myself

as my gut usually tends to be right. But she did it and kept on doing it well past the fifty page mark. Of course I had to keep reading to see if I was right.

### **What worked . . .**

I immediately got inside Skye's head because *ALTERNITY*'s written in a such a way that it was impossible not to. Aside from the fact that it's first person POV, of course. All of these things are going on and I was left questioning them all right along with Skye. I didn't know who to trust at first and the second-guessing issue I mentioned above kept me turning the pages and reading on to find out whether I was right or not. Was I? Maybe. Or not. Her confusion made her all the more likable and I was able to sympathize with her almost immediately. She's lost and being made to feel more and more insane by the people around her. She's losing her grip on reality and I think realizing that you're unable to determine what's real and what isn't is absolutely terrifying.

Mari really did an excellent job of blending the Terra world and the New York world so that you kept questioning which was the real place and which wasn't. Where did Skye belong? Was Terra even real? Hell, was New York even real? Was this all really happening in the mind of a bug? It constantly toed that line of questioning that was just enough to be driving without being incredibly annoying and withholding for the sake of withholding because the author couldn't think of another tactic. It reads real and it reads convincing and it keeps you dancing in the questioned reality for nearly the entire length of the book.

The world itself is an interesting blend of post-apocalyptic and sci-fi and again with the reality-bending elements, for most of the story you're left trying to discern which it is and if it's both elements or not. Mari built this underground world that actually felt spacious and not like living in a gutter (think *ENCLAVE* by Ann Aguirre as an opposite). It didn't feel like it had this underground quality until she descended into the even lower levels of Terra and introduced you to a world of mutants and slave labor that kept the first level of the world feeling like something more real than a neon snow globe.

### **What didn't work . . .**

I felt the mutant aspect was a little much and the sterile factor should have played more into the lower echelons' survival, or lack thereof, and it didn't. It was mentioned that it was a miracle that these lower levels of people were still able to reproduce but that's where the mention ended. The issue is they're mining in radioactive earth but no one really seems to be suffering from radiation sickness or sterility and we're a few generations in at this point from moment zero. Yeah, I get it. It's sci-fi and post-apocalyptic and all around fiction but these little nuggets tend to grab me and cling on, much to my detriment because they just become little worms inside my brain. I understand the effect it was supposed to have on Skye but I don't think it needed to go as far as it did because it kind of broached unrealistic for me (go figure, I know).

I wasn't too much of a fan of Dawn and Skye either. I get why Skye was drawn to him (to refrain from spoiling that's all I'll say on the matter) but I don't feel like their relationship added to the story at all. Dawn could have easily been a girlfriend helping her out and I don't think it would have made a difference.

### **And in the end . . .**

Yes. Read it. It's lighter on the sci-fi and heavier on the total mind screw and it'll keep you guessing and second-guessing and third-guessing until you're blue in the face. Maybe you'll get it and maybe you won't but I will tell you there's a twist in there I didn't see coming at all and I loved the book all the more for it. Just when I was starting to doubt Mari for taking the easy way out she comes back around and pimp slaps



me. For shame for doubting Mari! Shame! Mari goes THERE and then some and I love her more for it. She takes Skye to a new level as a result and adds another layer not only to Terra but to her story as a whole for being willing to take it to where it needed to go.

You have to admire the woman for that.

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### **Eric Mesa says**

There are a few things in this book that are a bit on the nose - for example, there's a distinct Moon theme going on with a bunch of things and the main characters are Skye and Dawn. However, the deeper you get into the book, the more these things make sense. There are similar themes are Alice in Wonderland and The Wizard of Oz that are referenced via the names of things. At first I found it slightly annoying, but eventually it just seemed like a crazy meta commentary on how there are no truly original stories and everything is borrowing from the stories that came before it. So what starts off clunky ends up being much more seamless at the end.

I think my best praise for Mari Mancusi, however, is the plot twist that occurs in the book. While there seems to always be a clear bad guy, Mancusi does sow enough doubt that I found myself doubting my predictions about halfway through. But the twist at the end was great because it didn't invalidate my prediction, rather it enhanced it and changed the meaning of everything that came before it. This is definitely a good exemplar for teaching writing students how to write twists in a way that won't be annoying to the reader.

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### **Ioana says**

This novel was originally published in print as Moongazer, back in 2010, which made for some confusing 10 minutes when I discovered two books with the same blurbs.

Skye, the MC, is a normal college student. She has a roommate, friends, an annoying cousin and a sweet boyfriend. She also has terrifying, vivid nightmares, from which she wakes up scared and on the verge of having an asthma attack. I felt like the author tried too hard to make her the perfect geek. She's in film school, she has a job as a game tester. Moreover, she's their most trusted employ and the only tester they actually pay.

*"Then he leaned over and kissed me on the cheek. I endured it for a second, then brushed him away. He was always trying to PDA me in the hallway, which was more than a little embarrassing. After all, we were in school. Teachers were watching. Not to mention fellow students."*

Not only is she embarrassed of her boyfriend kissing her in public, but she considers a kiss on the cheek as PDA? I have to wonder if the author knows any college students or if she just wanted Skye to be a prude. I had a hard time believing Skye was over 18 because of similar internal dialogue and her behavior.

Skye is unwillingly transported to another world, Terra, where people think she's Mariah, the leader of the Eclipsers. The world-building was unimpressive. I was expecting much more from an alternate world, even though Terra was supposed to be eerily similar to Earth.

Both Duske, the senator of Terra, and Dawn, an ex-Eclipser, were interesting characters and I enjoyed them much more than I liked Skye, Dawn especially. I liked how believable his reactions and behavior towards Skye were.

The whole premise of the book, the idea of alternate worlds, was really cool and had so much potential. I can't really say that potential was squandered, but what Alternity lacked was real sense of anticipation. One guy tells her one thing, the other tells her something entirely different, she herself has doubts and suspicions, yet she's completely oblivious and refusing to believe anything up until the big reveal. Which was annoying. I, the reader, already knew where things were heading. Almost.

Skye's refusal of accepting the obvious truth, coupled with a slow pacing, made the book a difficult read.

Towards the end, we're presented with not one, but two MAJOR twists, one after the other. Bam-bam! I have to admit, I didn't see any of them coming. As I said, I did know the general direction, but that? Wasn't expecting that! However, by that point, I wasn't that interested in the book anymore, not that engaged, so no matter how shocking the reveals were, they still didn't save it for me.

I wanted more, dammit! More action, more fireworks, just..more. In contrast with the moment everything comes together in a satisfying conclusion, the very end was anticlimactic and felt rushed.

Overall, it was an okay read and I liked it, but that's all.

*\*I received an ARC from the publisher through NetGalley. No money or favors were exchanged.*

You can read this review, and more, here:

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