



## Dominant Predator

*S.A. McAuley*

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## **Dominant Predator** S.A. McAuley

*A relationship is the least of Merq's and Armise's concerns...*

With one bullet Merq Grayson set the wealthiest citizens of the world on a collision course with the poorest—those fighting for their freedom. As the Borders War reignites, the Revolution faces heavy losses. They scramble to maintain their advantage, to strike at the Opposition and crumble their power structure before they are able to rally.

But Merq is in the midst of an internal battle that shakes him to the core. For the first time in his life Merq will have to reconcile the inherent tragedy of war and decide just how much vengeance can be justified by spilt blood. How much can he trust the people around him? The president, Neveed, his former soldiers, his parents...and Armise.

Merq and Armise find themselves off grid and on the hunt for Committee members. Merq is just as unsettled with Armise at his side as he was with Armise as an enemy, but they will have to learn how to fight together—or they just might die together.

*Reader Advisory: This book contains scenes of violence.*

## **Dominant Predator Details**

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## From Reader Review Dominant Predator for online ebook

**Linda ~ chock full of hoot, just a little bit of nanny ~ says**

2nd Edition

I'm not really sure what to make of this one. The writing is at the same level as the first book, and there are some answers to some of the questions that I had, and yet this book feels like mostly filler. It doesn't have an actual point. It moves things forward and the characters do things, but nothing really actually happens.

I feel more like this series was supposed to be one book that then got divided into novellas. The world-building, while there is some, isn't to the level I expect it to be when it comes to these kinds of stories either. There's still too many unknowns and Merq keeps thinking of things he needs to talk to Armise about but never does. They go on a mission they don't come close to completing before getting called back. We find out some things but then never hear what happened after that. I'm left feeling kind of unfulfilled and not that enthused to see what happens next.

I was also hoping for some more reasoning behind Armise's defection to the Revolution, but it continues to be because of Merq. Which is awesome. Love in this dire and grim existence is affirming. However, he barely knew Merq when he defected, which makes it this weird sort of instalove that makes zero sense.

So, good writing but no real substance.

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### **Shelley says**

Effing Goodreads lost my review!

So to put it simply: I'm not sold on this series. The main issue I have is the MC's inner dialogue which is WAY too grandiose and completely ill-fitting with his character. That annoys me. The plot is simple and predictable and I just expected a lot more development here. The sex is fine. Armise is hot, blah blah blah. I don't know, I'm just not sold. Sorry.

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### **Kathleen says**

I loved the first one...I'm not sure this one really had a point. I was left with many questions and too few answers. See my friend Linda's review for an excellent summary with which I completely agree.

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

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### **Baba says**

**4 stars.**

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I've heard this is a series that will contain seven books. I'm honestly not very keen on reading the entire series because it's going to be very expensive. I thought it would end after Powerless which I will be reading. However, I might quit after Powerless. We'll see how it goes.

Review to come...probably...

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## **Xing says**

Rating: 4.5 stars

A direct continuation of One Breath One Bullet, the Dominant Predator expands the cast of characters. While the story focused mainly on Merq and Armise (and it still does), we are introduced to several more characters. We know the “good” guys and the “bad” guys. The world of this story, at this point, becomes a playing field I relished in experiencing.

But most of all, we see the relationship between our two soldiers ignite. And like dynamite set ablaze, the end result is an explosion of epic proportions. In this case, the Dominant Predator has more action, more romance, and more self-realizations. It's still told from Merq's first person POV, which was fine by me. He makes for an interesting narrator and I can't help but root for him as he continues to grow into this new person with Armise's help.

I don't know what else to really say about this sequel. I just really liked – moreso than its predecessor. It doesn't end on a cliffhanger (thank goodness! At the time of this review, the third book has not been released yet). But things are far from settled, and I can't wait to see how things will unfold.

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## **haletostilinski says**

**4.5 stars!**

This was so good! Seeing the gradual deepening of Merq and Armise's relationship is so fun to read. Merq has to deal with the knowledge now that Armise is not his enemy as he was for so long before, and what that means for himself and Armise and whatever their thing is - not quite a relationship, but getting there.

Plot wise, this was more of a transitional book, I think - between the start up of the Borders War again at the end of the first to getting into the meat of what the series is about, I think. Because Armise is definitely hiding something and there is more going on that Merq doesn't know, I can feel it - and Armise too.

But I felt this was more setting up what's to come, and furthering Merq and Armise's relationship along. And Armise's POV chapter at the end was awesome but of course just left me with more questions! (Of course we can't have the answers yet.) The ending was a tad abrupt for me, but seeing as this is a part of the series I wasn't too put off by it.

Also, there are several hot sex scenes in this \*fansself\* yesss.

This was a solid second installment, and I will definitely be reading the third in this series soon!

## Optimist ?King's Wench? & MANTIES Champion says

### 3.5 Stars

**Informal Poll:** How many of you read that title and thought, "something kinky's about to go down"? Me too! Major chain yankage there.

*Dominant Predator* picks up where *One Breath One Bullet* ended without any time jumps. Actually, this one is linear time-wise which was one of my quibbles about book one. We get a considerable amount of character development with Merq and overall this struck me as a better told story than *One Breath One Bullet*.

Something I neglected to mention in my review of *One Breath One Bullet* is Ms. McAuley's skill with a story arc. We're barreling towards an inevitable and what's sure to be an epic clash between "good" and "evil" a.k.a. between the Opposition and the Revolution, the only question is how will Merq and Armise fit into that clash. *Dominant Predator* focuses more on the move/countermove between the two sides than on Merq and Armise's relationship. This one also seemed more violent than *One Breath One Bullet*.

As much as I like a good story and am starting to like sci-fi/cyberpunk, the relationship development between Merq and Armise took a turn towards old-married-couples-ville. They're together throughout but... I WANT MY ANGRY SEX BACK! I got one quasi angry oral sex scene and that was it. \*pouts\* Ms. McAuley did cushion the lack of angry sex blow by having Merq get another piercing and a tattoo. That scene had so much potential... Building a bridge and Moving. On.

I like the story arc in *Dominant Predator* and if this were strictly a sci-fi book I'd be pleased as punch, but it's a M/M romance and I think that storyline took a back seat to the battle-against-the-forces-of-evil storyline. I think Ms. McAuley's going for relationship development via becoming partners and relying upon one another, which oftentimes works but here I think it missed the mark. My 2¢ as to what makes that approach work is having POVs of both protags, showing how they both are moving away from being enemies to being friends/lovers. Here it's more telling rather than showing. Both of the first two books of this series are told from Merq's perspective so we get a peek into his inner musings on Armise, but there's insufficient dialogue between them to show the reader the building of that trust.

Armise is still a mystery. Ms. McAuley's doing an excellent job of keeping him in the dark so to speak. Better story but less relationship development again has me wavering in the **3.5ish Star** range.

### Reviewed for

*I would like to thank Totally Bound for providing me with a copy of this book in exchange for my honest opinion.*

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### Kat says

'Dominant' and 'Predator'..too hard to ignore.:p

## Tara♥ says

Okay. I'm all in. Totally on board. Ready to join the revolution over here. That was awesome!!!

Myself and Merq found ourselves on rocky ground during this. There were times I got really angry and frustrated with him. He is so closed off and distant. I felt like giving him a slap and telling him to stop behaving like a teenager on more than one occasion. He and Armise are so similar. Both men are weapons whose soul purpose for being is to be used by their respective countries to achieve a goal, be it independence or total domination. Therefore I couldn't understand why Merq behaved the way he did. As the story progressed however I started to see the vast differences between them. It's almost like Merq is just learning how to be a person. He has little to no ties and sees a potential traitor in almost everyone. Armise at least has some sense of himself, he can think for himself and make decisions based on his wants and needs. He also has tradition to fall back on and I think it is what puts him in a much more stable mindset than Merq. Both men are deeply scarred but Armise seems to be the more stable of the two. I say that now, we shall see in the future if that remains true.

Both these men are incredibly dangerous and it is important to keep in mind that they don't walk in the shadows, they prowl in the dark. They are killers and empathy is not something they understand never mind recognise in others.

**"We exist to kill. To be the darkness that descends and wipes out hope. Others are meant to be leaders and to strive for greater good, but not us. We cover our hands in blood so the righteous can disavow any knowledge of the evils that must occur for there to be peace. And in our world, if you're not behind the rifle you're in front of it."**

This makes for some interesting scenarios in their relationship. They really have no idea what to do with each other. It's fantastic.

Dominant Predator is dark and at times it feels like there won't ever be any light in the future. I can't wait to see how the revolution progresses because right now things feel kind of bleak. What I love the most is I couldn't even begin to guess about what is coming.

It's also important to note that I'm so in love with Armise it's not even funny. I think he might be giving Hooch a run for his money!!

*\*Note:* You must look at this photo while mentally adding lots of scars and lots of black tattoos. It makes it even better. Promise.

**"Fuck that. You could have compromised the mission. You're the one who said this war goes on whether we live or die."**

**Armise's nostrils flared and he cracked his neck. "I'm also the one who said my loyalty is to you, not any of them. We stand together on this. There is no other option. Not for me."**

That quote is positively romantic when it comes to these two!!

## Adam says

### 3.5 stars

I read the first book in this series, *One Breath One Bullet*, over two years ago. I liked it, but the series still wasn't complete so I decided to wait until the last book was released before continuing.

Though I didn't re-read book 1, I didn't have trouble following along. 'Dominant Predator' picks up right at the point that the first book ended. Merq and Armise hit the ground running as war between the Revolutionaries and Opposition breaks out.

I liked how the author explored the realities of war - that it is very rarely a black-and-white situation, with the good guys fighting the bad guys. It's an ugly affair with monsters on each side, and with numerous other factions moving around as well.

There is a lot of character and relationship development in this re-vamped edition of book 2. While I liked both characters in book 1, I didn't really get a good feel for either of them. Plus, their connection wasn't very fleshed out.

In 'Dominant Predator' I got a much better understanding of what made Merq tick, and clearly Armise has a story to tell too. The two are still working things out, and clearly have a long way to go before they'll be a functioning couple. But that's understandable, given their circumstances and history.

However, I ended up being disappointed with the political drama. There's a lot of great build-up, with strategy scenes and talk of the Revolution. But it was a lot more telling than showing, and the book ended right when things were getting interesting.

But I'm intrigued, especially with that ending. On to book 3!

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## Jenn says

This is the second book in the *Borders War* series featuring Merq Grayson, a Peacemaker working for the Continental States, and Armise Darcan, a Dark Ops officer supposedly working for The People's Republic of Singapore. These men should be enemies, as the two sides are engaged in a war. However, they have maintained a consistent sexual relationship for over a decade, and the end of the first book, the Revolution began with the shot of the first bullet in over 200 years.

So let me start off this review stating that I much preferred this book to book one. It's not that the writing was any better, because I think this author has immense talent in terms of world-building and presenting interesting characters, and plot twists that actually keep me excited as the series progresses. The reason I preferred this book, however, is because I'm finally catching on and keeping up with the author. This is one of the series I can tell that I'm going to have to reread all of the books each time a new one comes out. I believe there will only be three books, so this isn't a hardship, but in many regards I wish this came out as one large novel. That being said, the author knows exactly where to end each novella, so that it punches you

in the gut with tension. There are many facets to this story. Politics, family relationships, lover and ex-lover relationships, co-workers, and feelings of betrayal, disgust, lust, and maybe even love. The reader needs to keep up with all the terms, the timelines, and the characters. I wish the series progressed in a linear manner, because I believe it would flow smoother. It often has flashbacks, which can be confusing at times.

But let's get to this book in particular. I LOVE Merq and Armise!!! I love their entire dynamic and whether the other can fully trust the other. I want to believe in my gut that both are being honest, if not to others, than at least with each other. The sex scenes are hot and actually progress their relationship. THANK YOU, JESUS. The scenes aren't filler, and each time one happens, it's new, sexy, and peels away a layer to their relationship. I also love that the secondary characters serve a purpose in exposing different aspects about Merq and Armise, while providing new plot threads. There's still a lot left unsaid between these two, which is both sad and humorous considering how many years they've had this ongoing 'thing' between the two of them. But the author still reveals relationship dynamics slowly and interestingly as the series progresses. From sleeping habits, to reasons for participating in different areas of the war, to sexual preferences. I do wish we'd actually get more reveals about them, but I think it makes sense how the author has depicted their relationship to the reader thus far. For years these two men have, for the most part, only expressed themselves with their bodies, both sexually and with violence. They've never shown affection in traditional ways, nor would either at this point know how to handle that. They know how to show the other that they lust after the other, they know how to show anger or disappointment, maybe even fear, but all of the rest will come later. They are in the middle of a Revolution, and trust has come slowly, but both feel that in the midst of lies and war, they have to have at least one person they can believe above all others.

The secondary characters are also really intriguing and I'm dying to know more about Simion (who I have a soft spot for) and Neveed. Also, 2nd key?!?!?! The technology is awesome, and I'm excited to learn more about the gen modification. I hope the author really writes this series for many, many books, because I feel she's only touched the surface of this world and these characters.

Recommended for those that love sci-fi, enemies to lovers, action, plot twists, and hot smut (β who doesn't love that last one!!).

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## Susan says

### **REREAD REVIEW (2nd Edition)**

**January 24, 2016**

**4.5 stars**

The last chapter, the Armise POV, had me screaming at my kindle. These new editions are killing it!

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### **ORIGINAL REVIEW**

**September 20, 2013**

**4.5 stars**

Somebody make this series into a big-budget action movie...IMMEDIATELY...pleeeeeease!

Dominant Predator is so so good...it has it all: strong characters, political intrigue (story), cool weapons, futuristic war-time battle scenes, tension, a nasty bad guy, a bunch of who-can-I-trust good guys...all the juicy stuff. And to just give it that extra nudge: Merq and Armise – damn these 2 are SEXY! URGH! I want them. Both. Together. To be **MINE**.

I read book one of the Borders War series, One Breath One Bullet, and really enjoyed it. The first book intro's you to Merq & Armise, 2 loner soldiers fighting on opposite sides, often times head-to-head, with sexual tension in spades. The world building was a bit confusing, but by the end I was sucked in. Book 2 picks up immediately following.

*\*Ok, so it's here, amongst friends, that I'll admit what a dork I am: I was reading the PROLOGUE to this book and was totally confused because, not realizing it was a scene from the past, I thought I was, yet again, lost...and almost got so frustrated, I was going to reread book 1! So, lesson to all: the prologue is set IN THE PAST! :)*

I won't go into too much lest I spoiler some of the stuff you learn in book 1, but I will say this: SA McAuley keeps setting up this series in ways that make you hope and plead and beg that there will be at least 20 more books. Every time the author reveals something, a new secret or question or dilemma takes it's place. And you have to uncover the truth while desperate to find out what happens next. ALL of this is made TASTIER by the relationship that is building between the 2 MC's. Men who don't trust, finding themselves trusting one another. It's rough and masculine and powerful.

The only thing it's missing is a bit more depth of emotion from the characters. But, I sense that restraint is completely the author's intention.

This book left me WANTING...not because it didn't deliver, but because WHAT it delivered fuels desire for more – I want MORE of the story, I want MORE of the history, I want MORE of Merq & Armise, I want more death (<-...ummmm...well...I do...!)

This book (this series) is for people who like sci-fi, futuristic military type books, or for people who like fast paced action books, or for people who like 2 hot MC's lovin' each other books, or for anyone breathing..

*Leave a comment and enter to win a \$50 gift certificate!*

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## **Simone says**

What a thrilling experience!

Consider this a fair warning: you'll become addicted to this series, suffer from sleep deprivation, forget to feed your cat (okay, that might just be me! ;) ) and can't put these books down! I can't get Merq and Armise out of my head, not while I'm at work and not even in my sleep...

I loved this book even more than the first one. While One Breath One Bullet was about being enemies (or should I say apparently enemies?), Dominant Predator is about being partners. Merq and Armise have to work together on a mission and there are a lot of doubts about doing the right thing. At the same time, their feelings for each other are growing stronger, even if love is a word neither of them dares to think, much less say out loud.

This is one of the best series I've ever read and a must-read for me!

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## Monique says

### JUST FUCKING AWESOME!

Not a word I use being British... awesome that is, **well done** doesn't have quite the same impact and the other word is just my potty mouth and exuberance coming to the fore... I LOVE this series!!!

Okay... So I love my m/m romance and find it wandering into my thoughts even when not reading, books and characters just seem to take up residence and swirl through my mind... and the two holding my imagination right now are Armise and Merq, it is like watching an action movie with high adrenaline situations, intense to the point of mind blowing and the sex is just incredible. S.A. McAuley has fulfilled my ultimate fantasy with this series... and **Holy Fuck!** ...these two men are the epitome of **BIG, HOT, POWERFUL, SEXY, ALPHA MALE SOLDIERS... with TATTOOS and PIERCINGS!!!** ...be still my beating heart!!! They are tough and fearless men, knife wounds nothing more than a bee sting... let's just stitch it up here! How do I even find that cool composure hot? Well, it is ...and not only that she brings this world to life, so much so I felt like I was dodging bullets with them. I love her writing, I love how she can make my heart bleed for two characters that are devoid of all emotion, yet this book is full of emotional intensity.

The prologue pops back in time to their first sexual encounter, where yet again Armise saves Merq's arse... and oh boy! Ms McAuley certainly gets the party going with a bang! Hot and heavy sex surrounded by troupes and skirmishes as battle wages around them. They are enemies yet Merq can't help himself and Armise in his cool and calm manner is trying to gain the trust of a man that will hold his heart for the next fourteen years!

I am not sure I understand all the politics of this world yet, but in this book we see the start of the people's revolution, where they no longer want to be a society dictated to by the wealthy who live in ignorance of the citizens so poor they can barely survive. This is a desolate world due to the ravages of the Borders War, I imagine it grey and bleak, void of all colour and nature's life force... a landscape of destruction with the filth, rot and the stench of inhuman existence... and that is what they were fighting for. Together they depart on their first mission and Merq is full of vengeance for the twelve members of the Opposition Committee responsible for needless deaths and hell bent on revenge against Ahriman a man so hungry for power he will do whatever it takes to succeed and is proving to be formidable adversary.

**How do you know how to love if that emotion has never been a part of your life? How do you put your trust in someone when you have only ever trusted yourself? ...and when you have been alone in the world, how do you equate the fact that someone care's enough to give up everything they have ever known for you and wait fourteen years for the privilege.**

His (Armise) defection from Singapore to be at my side had shifted how I viewed everything around me. Maybe that was part of the unease I couldn't seem to shake. I'd never let anyone get close enough to me to have that much impact on my life.

Merq lives in the darkness, he had been programmed and indoctrinated into a way of life with no wants,

needs or desires, to feel no fear or pain he had existed with a purpose, yet ignorant to the very reason he was fighting, information given, received and carried out... but he had never truly lived and in this book we see the infinitely patient Armise wait for any sign of encouragement... looking for the smallest chink in his armour, waiting for Merq to come to him, to go through the process of soul searching and understand that he is there for Merq, he is the reason he fights, his only reason to exist and he ain't going anywhere... just waiting for Merq to realise he feels the same. If I was Armise I would have dumped his ass by now!

“that is why I'm here. We fight together and the world has no choice but to drop to their knees and beg for mercy”

We don't see a lot of emotion between these two, the conversations are stilted and to the point yet it is what they don't say, it's the raw, powerful passion between them, it's seeing Merq come alive and starting to see the world through new eyes, no longer blinkered, and Armise so selfless, his heart full yet remaining so stoically guarded it had *my* heart hurting... and the fierce intensity of their burning desire, where sex is their only outlet for their feelings, hard and dirty sex, no intimacy and no sentiment yet the sexual tension is palpable and the simple statements and gestures that say nothing... yet say so much.

He put his palm to my chest, and breathing deeply, steadily, as if he was ensuring that my heart was still beating.

We are only on book two and already I don't want this series to end, there is so much more to come, questions I have that need to be answered and I am salivating in anticipation...S.A McAuley is a writer that I totally connect with, and her writing can only be described as excellent, as is the world building and characterisation. I love Merq, there is a vulnerability to him that has my stomach in knots and equally Armise's selfless love and dedication to Merq just made me want to cry.

If you haven't read book one yet... get a wriggle on and if you are waiting for book two... ENJOY!!!

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## **Borderstar says**

This one picks up pretty soon after the end of Book #1 and carries straight on with the action and the aftermath.

This isn't told in the time jumps like the first book, which I kind of missed, but at the same time we do learn a bit more about everyone and their background, although Armise still seems like a bit of an enigma.

I was quite frustrated with Merq through a lot of this one and while I still really enjoyed this, I'm not sure this instalment was quite as gripping for me as the first. I ended this one thinking I will definitely pick up the next Book in the series 'at some point soon' rather than 'immediately' like I did after Book #1.

I do like the way that each of these is novella length so it's quite easy to speed through them.

