



# **Fearless Leader**

*Tricia Owens*

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When a young, uptight police lieutenant comes up against a street-wise and sexually aggressive empath, sparks fly...

Lieutenant Black, an intense young man with a mysterious past and a hatred of the street drug Bliss, is the leader of the police team which frequently targets psypaths, those with psychic powers. When the beautiful and sexy empath Calyx Starr is pulled from the streets and forced onto his team as part of the police captain's secret agenda, Black must deal not only with Starr's relentless seductions, but also a dangerous telepath with a deadly grudge who has targeted the empath and Black's team.

Calyx Starr isn't used to being denied. Born on the streets and forced into a life of prostitution to fuel his Bliss habit, Calyx is street-wise and tough, and thinks he can use Black for his own secret plans. However the more Calyx learns about Black and his team, the more the empath begins to think Black may be more than a challenge...he may be the only man Calyx can trust with his life and his heart. Too bad Black is a man with dangerous secrets, and becoming involved with him means Calyx may wind up dead or psychically destroyed.

## **Fearless Leader Details**

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Author : Tricia Owens

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## From Reader Review Fearless Leader for online ebook

### Reflection says

Ultimately disappointing because the blurb is interesting but the execution falls flat.

I picked this book up free on Amazon, I suspect the author hopes to entice readers to buy the next five books in the series, however the method of doing so is my ultimate pet hate - no resolution - and a cliff hanger it leaves me feeling cheated, irritated and unimpressed.

Frankly I do not think I have the time to waste finding out what happens next to mediocre characters.

I could possibly be tempted if I had any investment in the protagonist team leader Black, but it takes a lot to sufficiently suspend disbelief that everyone in the team and the majority of secondary characters are gay, not to mention most of them (and it seems anyone Black comes into contact with) lust after the enigmatic team leader. There is no immediate chemistry leaping off the page and it just left me bored and frankly dubious.

The latest recruit to the team Starr also finds himself drawn to their mysterious and brooding leader. Whilst Starr is engaging his treatment within the book felt like a plot device and another victim of Black's unexplained allure.

"If I can't touch you, then that goes the same for Genesis and Captain Dick and whoever else is out there lusting after you, Darkness."

Plus do not get me started that the only woman in the whole book is a kidnap victim with no speaking part.

Life is just too short to waste. Hugely disappointed.

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### Heather the Queen of (Smut)Books says

Ummmm. I don't know how exactly to rate this book. Did I like it? I'm not exactly sure like is the right word. You know how it is when you see a accident? You know you shouldn't look but when you do... you can't look away? I always look away. Always. But this time, I couldn't. It's like that.

There's a whole lot of bullshit to navigate and you don't know who to trust. The ones you're supposed to like are horribly flawed and the hero is broken. It's dark, gritty, morose and yet oddly compelling. The main leader Black, is probably the most messed up of all of them and I don't quite know what to make of him. Calyx, the druggie whore is more likeable in his honesty. He makes no apologies for who and what he is or what he wants. Everyone else has an agenda and are manipulating and calculating. Everyone seems to want Black but I don't get why. He's not as honorable as I thought he would be and he's got martyrdom down to an art form.

There is dub-con and non-con in this and it's not pretty. I knew that going in but it didn't make it any easier to

get through. One of my resolutions this year is to challenge myself to read outside of my comfort zone and to DNF books more instead of forcing myself to read something I don't like. And yet I didn't DNF this when uncomfortable, I found myself glued to my iPad, unable to stop. I need to know how this plays out, I need to see what Black is hiding, I need to see him break the chains he's binded himself into with his hero worship and obligations. I want him to be free and I want Calyx to tap dat ass. And I want Captain Dicknose to fry in the fiery pits of hell. Just sayin.

If you like flawed, complex characters and the dark and gritty shit...this serial may be for you. I admit it caught me and I will continue. Available via KU.

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### **Kelly H. (Maybedog) says**

Wow. I just... wow.

First off, this is not a romance. There are romantic interests, i.e., everyone wants Black and he doesn't know what he wants, but no single romance that you can root for despite what the blurb says. Everyone is flawed, severely so. No one is all good, although there are people who are all bad. In fact, I couldn't stand many of the sympathetic characters at one point or another. But the people are complex and interesting and distinct individuals. My heart breaks for Black. I just want to hold him tightly until he can let his guard down for just a minute.

There are a lot of questions left unanswered here. There is kind of a cliffhanger, but not exactly--more like this is an episode in a serial that doesn't necessarily have a plot. I must read the next one right now. But I think you could feel satisfied reading just this one and not feeling the need to read the second in the series immediately. Maybe.

The book was dark, and brutal, and nasty. There is intensity in everything, suspense and fear and horror on almost every page. It's not a pleasant book at all. There are some horrible things done that should make me want to hate almost all of the characters, but somehow, I forgave them because I understood them. That takes skill.

The story took me a few minutes to get into but once I had, I was hooked and couldn't put it down. I finished it at a bar between rounds of the trivia game we were competing in.

I know I'm not really telling you anything here, but I don't know what to tell without giving anything away. And really, the book was about emotion and power plays and pain, and how do I describe that?

I will say a few things that I didn't like: I hate the term "flesh-toned" since that could be anything from pale pink to extremely dark brown. It's almost always used to mean light beige, though, and that is appalling. Out of the blue, the story began same-page head jumping which I hate. I really hate love triangles and this was a quadrangle. An electric motorcycle would not have exhaust pipes to burn you, and a laser gun would not give the same results as a projectile weapon for testing purposes. Duh, recoil?

I'm off to buy the next one right now and I don't care if it fits in any challenges I'm part of. I have to read it.

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## Shelley says

It's like ICoS met PsyCops they fell in love and produced a promising hot mess.

Oh the recipe is right; all the ingredients are present and correct even if they aren't entirely fresh. It's still enough to get me excited.

You will find a futuristic world with telepaths, sadistic manipulators, drugs, violence, men-of-mystery (note the plural), dark pasts, secrets, deceit and I could go on and on – such is the latitude of this book. There are just some things that never get stale and I'm happy with that – just spice it up with a pinch of creativity and you've got me hooked. I really don't ask for much (especially with those ingredients on hand) but I do ask that it's not overcooked.

At the starting point of a new series I really don't need three (!! ) villains OR three (!! ) potential lovers vying for my MC's attention. One vile, sadistic puppet master with the power to viciously manipulate both our MC's to the extreme is enough (for now) thank you!

And it really irks me that the author gambles with my interest by giving weight to the possibility of a love triangle quadrangle when the outcome is obvious because we've all read the blurb.

Too many unnecessary points of view made for shallow characterisation and I felt dizzy in establishing the true elements of Lieutenant Black's self-contradictory character.

Having to suspend my disbelief over his ever-present magnetic sexual allure was bad enough. Now Calyx Starr (empath, criminal, prostitute) is the one character that stays true to his form throughout. And because of that, I connected with him. I believed in his pain, his need and in his attraction to Black. I also want to know more about his past. Is this where I'll find the author's pinch of creative spice I wonder?

There is not much in terms of world building – only that they use electro-hover crafts in the future. All the men we meet are gay or that way inclined, and now that I think about it ... where there any woman at all?

Fearless Leader is not a bad read - its fast paced with action, dark intrigue, suspense and at least one villain who deserves death by fire!

I found that the story really began to shine at the 70% point, so I'm going to recommend it because there are more of you out there that won't blink at the issues I have with this book. I'm just a cynic who doesn't like the setup and (strange) progression is all. I really wish the author hadn't tried so hard. Angst only works when you're emotionally invested and I wasn't, not really.

On a more positive note I found the underlying darkness that is veiled in nightmares and secret meetings quite fascinating. The mere existence of telepaths, psychopaths and empaths existing and interacting with normal folk is an interesting thread, and one I would like to see develop further. There is a lot yet to be revealed and yes I want to know; especially if it has anything to do with Calyx Starr. But do I really want to deal with the petty jealousies over Black's affection or his self-sacrificing martyrdom for a team that's fallen apart?

Hmm ... I'll see.

Maybe ....

Probably :/

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### **Aviva says**

I couldn't care for the characters, they were boring and the MC full of manpain. And what is it with these pseudo military teams where all the members are gay (leaders of rivals teams included)? Especially when they all fuck each other or think about fucking each other and then feel a tiny drop of guilt because oh no, it's against the rules.

Oh and I really didn't like the writing, I wanted the empath to die every time he used Sweearheart or Darkness (also they narrated every little thing they felt way too much). A shame because the summary sounded really interesting. I should scream betrayal now.

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### **NeRdyWYRM says**

#### **Supreme mindfuckery**

This book is disturbing, but in an oddly good way. It is very, very dark but occasionally, I'm grateful for that. My psyche needs a good kick in the figurative balls from time to time. A warning for other readers: cliffhanger. I generally don't like cliffhangers but if I know ahead of time, I am at least able to check and see that future installments are available. In this case they are so that wasn't a hardship.

The writing is good. I didn't notice any glaring inconsistencies or editing issues, but the world-building was a little weak. So far it seems like the whole city is a bunch of what amounts to crackhouses and back alleys with two teams of super cops running around like vigilantes under the command of a really fucked up dude. Even the futuristic element is largely lacking if that's what the author was going for. Think Gotham City on, well, Bliss. Juxtapose City is a weird combo of dark and rundown, yet technologically advanced ... at least in theory. What else to say ...?

Okay. The Captain is really and *truly* loathsome.

Black is broken and oh-so-hot because of it. Starr is OTT but intriguing and a little pathetic with all the masks he wears, but it makes me want to know who he really is.

Sundhill gives me the creeping creepies and Black's reaction to him so far makes me want to smack him. Then I remember how young he is and it's almost forgivable. I worry about the rest of the JC2 team ... they seem too soft. And Sola, the aptly named Wolf Sola ... I hope he either comes around or gets what's coming to him, whatever that may end up being. Call me psychic (hardy-har-har), but IMHO, it's this:

"So," you ask, "Where's the mindfuckery?" Well, the whole story so far really. The two teams don't know how screwed they are individually or overall. Everyone is being played against everyone else and against themselves. People are making bad decisions for some good reasons and whole lot of bad ones, but really they're all—**ALL**—being manipulated in a long, long game with multiple puppet masters. That much you can see coming.

Do we know who all the players are yet? No. But I can guess who at least one of them is besides the dear old Captain, and I think it's going to get really, really ugly—uglier than it already is—and not only will it stay that way, it's likely to get worse. Think [at least] two egomaniacs with a whole lot of control over both the pasts and futures of a bunch of weapons-carrying operatives and a few very dangerous psychics with no real external oversight of the power players. Include the fact that most of the characters of JC2 have experienced some kind of non-con or dub-con in the past or present and it's a recipe for some interesting, if heavy reading.

*I can't wait to finish the rest of these!*

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### **Nemesis says**

4.5 stars

This book took me by surprise, but in a very good way. I would describe it by dark themes and characters with mysterious pasts and plans. Calyx is such a wonderful protagonist, definitely not defined by an usual combination of characteristics. An empath, drug addict, occasionally a prostitute, flamboyant, provocative, mouthy, seductive, a survivor of the streets and of the gritty world of Juxtapose. Black (Darkness as Calyx calls him) on the other hand is controlled, dedicated to his team, is trying so hard to hide his emotions. These two opposites are so much fun watching them interact.

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### **Macky says**

Lets be honest, reviews are all based on personal opinions. So what constitutes a 5 \* rating? Obviously it's going to be different for everyone.

If a book or story manages to grab me from the word go, keep me totally enthralled till the bitter end and still leave me wanting more then its worth every one of those 5 stars. - OK... it does help if its written well too!

Take all the above, apply them to 'Fearless Leader' and "voila" another 5 \* review!

Tricia Owens has done a fantastic job with the world building in this novel, it put me in mind of Blade Runner - futuristic, dark and gritty. Full of elite special forces, empaths ,telepaths, designer drugs, secrets and corrupt police departments. Be warned there is mention of rape, there is also dubious consent and violence but it's integral to the plot and without it the story would lose a lot of its impact. I would say don't let it put you off if its not normally in your comfort zone, because everything else that makes up the story is awesome. It was exciting, complex, thought provoking and sexy! This has to be one of the most unusual m/m

romances I've ever read, very different to what I expected but all the better for that.

Calyx Starr and Black, talk about sexual tension! Both of them alone are hot stuff but together..... boy do those sparks fly. The relationship between them is complicated not only by their pasts but also from the interference by Captain Dickerson, Juxtapose City's police chief -one of the most obnoxious characters I've ever come across in any book, a cruel sadistic man who has hidden agendas of his own and secrets he holds over both of them. Add in professional competition between two elite groups of men and unrequited love, jealousy, deaths and dicey new recruits within Blacks group JC2 and you've got a whole fabulous package.

Cliff hanger style ending that ensures you just HAVE to get the next book. Yaaay, luckily the next in the series has just been released so no waiting! Juxtapose City 2 here I come!

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### **Mindy says**

Feel free to ignore me. I am the only one that didn't like this book. Just wasn't my cuppa tea.

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### **Rach says**

**If you are into slightly dark m/m books this could be the book for you!**

**I ABSOLUTELY LOVED LOVED LOVED IT!!**

**It was funny, dark and sexy. I loved the banter between mr Darkness himself- Black and the eccentric Calyx.**

**I NEED to read the next one and will do ASAP!**

**Thanks V for the rec mwaaaaahhhh I love you forever hahahahaha**

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### **Samantha says**

**Instant reaction:** What?! No! How dare you stop right there?!

And I don't use exclamation marks that much unless I mean business.

I wasn't sure what to expect when I started reading this, but it quickly sucked me in. There were some negatives, like the number of characters that were thrown the readers way immediately, and the general need for a round or two of edits, but overall this was just damn good.

The story is set in the future and follows a team of men, led by Black (no first name, but it works so whatever), who are working to rid the streets of criminals. Tragedy strikes, members of the team die, and the world goes on and the team needs new men. A wrench is thrown into everything when one of those men is

empath Calyx Starr. There's instant tension among the team for multiple reasons, including a boat load of jealousy (and love triangles/squares/tangles galore) and the stigma that comes with being an empath, or more commonly called, a "freak".

Pair all of that with the use of Bliss, a drug that runs rampant in Juxtapose city and is one of the very things JC2 team is trying to put an end to, which is necessary to work with Calyx and for him to cope with the barrage of emotions that comes with being around "normals", and you get a big ole mess.

This story certainly isn't lacking in depth or plot, and I have a feeling this is just the very tip of the iceberg in what the author has in store. Where do alliances lie? Who is truly good? Can JC2 trust each other? Who the hell is their fearless leader Black *really*? These are just some of the questions that you will be left asking after you read this. And trust me, I have conspiracy theories left and right on this.

I would've liked to see some more world building, but when we did get a few glimpses of it, the descriptions were just plain lovely.

It's dark and twisted in a way that not everyone will be able to appreciate, and the mystery that lurks within the depths of the story and is left unresolved by the end will leave you crazy, but damn, did I enjoy it.

I know what I'll be reading tomorrow for sure.

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### **Vivian ?(????)? says**

Fearless Leader seems to be an intriguing mix of various elements from different series I've read (and not read). It's a fast paced novel and truly lives up to that, because boy did it go by fast. I don't think I've read 207 pages quicker than I did this (which does make me doubt that figure).

In starting the novel, I admit I crinkled my nose slightly. The writing was mediocre and stilted and difficult to look past, especially since I hadn't been given a chance to immerse myself into the story (and ignore the writing). The opening scene, a nightmare (which I'm sure sure have been incredibly gripping), left my eyes rolling and me sagging in the chair. Thankfully, for both you and me, the book picked up, especially in the last quarter of book.

The main characters Black and Starr were both fucked in the head and (not to be crude or anything) but in the body as well. Literally. It's curious because I find myself stumbling upon this fucked-over-by-life-and-still-gonna-be-snarky character more often now. I saw it in ICoS, in Shattered Glass and probably a few other titles that have slipped my mind. Calyx strongly resembled Sin at times. Interesting. Anyway, just to give a broad, overarching view of the characters: most of them were fucking jackasses. The only one I've consistently liked is Calyx, and even he needs a punch in the gut sometimes. Several times. Regularly. I'm not even going to talk about Black. I've already read the the sequel (one after other; read: addictive) and so things are blurring. But goddamn, the author just needs to stop piling on fucked-up-mystery after mystery and angst past tidbits on him. Stop.

The plot was so-so but I definitely think this will pick up in the next few books. Something I find extremely distasteful is how much dub-con and non-con and everything of the ilk is thrown around. Now, like all others \*snort\*, I do enjoy the occasional dub-con or non-con or such, but I do dislike it when it's just littered

everywhere, even if it is essential to the plot and characters. Sometimes, I think certain scenes and developments really aren't necessary, especially since it seems more forced than anything. Oh god, I should not have used the word 'forced'. Pun unintended.

Anyway.

Although I'm not exactly singing praises and skipping down the street in joy I will say this: Juxtapose City is addictive. It's hot, it's fast, and you can't help but be swept in by the gush of fuckery and jackasses and inane plots and depravity of it all.

Rating: a wishy washy 3 stars. Not more, but maybe less.

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### **Vishous says**

**I am completely and utterly in love with LIEUTENANT BLACK!!!!**

**I am in love with the story!**

**I am in love with all other characters!**

**I am in love with the world that is described!**

**I am in love with how f\*cked up they all are!**

**I am simply in love with this book and I need to read sequel ASAP!**

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### **Meep says**

At 20% there's nothing remotely interesting or likeable about any character and the dystopian world is poorly described. The characters who are either - not handsome, baby-faced or in one case possessing long purple tipped hair, aren't developed beyond the surface there's nothing to explain their motivation or extremes of behaviour. There's not enough information to explain the world or create an image.

The Captain is mentor one minute and tawdry despot the next. Black (no pronouns are used) is tough, young for his job, troubled by his past, fierce about his new recruit. Nothing new. What should be gritty or emotional is eye-rolling. So far there's been a current lover thrown aside because..trauma, followed by a flashback sex scene with him, then the greeting of the lover-to-be as introduced in the blurb.

It sounded promising but feels like a bad mash-up of ICOS, THIRDS, In Death and possibly Merrily Gentry considering Black is called 'Darkness' and there's already been a BJ!

No thanks, I skimmed a bit further and nothing improved for me.

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## JustJen "Miss Conduct" says

4.5 stars - This book grabbed my interest pretty much right away. I really enjoy finding a book that doesn't fit neatly in any one category, and this is one of those stories.

In Juxtapose City, there are two elite police/DEA teams run by the Juxtapose City Police Department (JCPD), JCP1 and JCP2. Black is the mysterious young commander of JCP2. Sundhill is the leader of JC1. Both were appointed and are run by Captain Dickerson.

As the story begins, JCP2 are coming to grips with the loss of two team members. Dickerson assigns two individuals to replace the men; one is Sola, an exemplary soldier with an impeccable record, and Calyx Starr, an empath. There are also telepaths in this world.

Calyx is a sorry soul. I liked him from the start. He has had a crap life for the most part, being forced to use his body for currency for one reason or another, whether by force or by his own offering. He uses the drug Bliss to keep him sane from the overwhelming empathy senses. Others are able to dampen theirs by taking small doses of Bliss, but the empaths and telepaths are the main users of the drug. Unfortunately, Calyx is somewhat addicted. He comes across as flamboyant and nonchalant about everything, including sex, but he uses that as a cover up. He is placed into JCP2 by Dickerson, who pulls his every string and forces him to do horrible things. He makes it no secret that he wants Black. Dickerson orders this, but Calyx ends up having feelings of his own for Black.

Black is a darkhorse. He doesn't have much of a past on record, seems to harbor many secrets and looks up to Dickerson for saving him and appointing him to lead JCP2. He also looks up to Sundhill, who also shows an interest in Black, though his intentions are not clear. Black had a sexual relationship with JCP2 member Jake Cole but breaks things off not long into the story. Jake has deeper feelings for Black and has not given up hope of getting him back.

There is a lot going on in this story, between the characters and the issues themselves, such as the drug busts and the mysterious Genesis who seems to be out to take over the City and eliminate JCP2 completely. There are many questions left unanswered about Black and his past; Sundhill's motives; Dickerson's intentions; Calyx's future, etc.

I loved that this was another book that didn't fall neatly into any one category. There is a lot going on, but it is easy to follow. There is little sex, although a rape does occur. I didn't want to put this down and couldn't get enough of Calyx and Black. I went right out and bought the next two books and was thrilled I didn't have to wait to find out, as this ended with a slight cliffy. I'm looking forward to seeing these guys again and hope they can overcome their difficulties.

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