

J O E S I X P A C K

***HIDING
IN HIGH
HEELS***

**“How Not to be a Sissy” by Joe Six-Pack
A Tales of Transformation Story**



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HOW NOT TO BE A SISSY

Program 001: Calming Sensations

It was too soon to tell if anything had really happened, but he had hopes. High hopes. However, when Vince woke up, he scratched himself like he always did back when they were in college, yawned and stumbled to the kitchen where he swallowed half a pint of milk straight from the carton.

Certainly, if he were going by that, Howard would have discounted any hope of the messages taking hold. He had been flooding Vince's mind with music, spiked with subliminal messages.

That was no big secret. Vince knew the music was spiked. That's why he was listening to what Howard had called "mega relaxing" messages. These messages had been playing as Vince slept, leaking into his mind. It took a while for them to really take effect, so Howard knew he would just have to wait a while longer to see if any changes were made. Still, he just wanted a sign.

Vince was his old college buddy, frat brother and long-time thorn in his side. He was just friendly enough to be called a friend, but so annoying and irritating that you wished he would just vanish or fall out of touch. He pushed the obligations of friendship to the breaking point faster than anyone Howard had ever known. Ol' Vince was a walking party, always up for anything that promised a good time – not surprisingly, that meant that he was always drunkenly balancing on the edge between having said good time and getting into big trouble. Now he had gone right over that line, in a rather spectacular way, and done himself in – big time.

He showed up late last night, desperate and pleading, claiming to be at the end of his rope. His suit looked like he had slept in it – for several days. A deal or some other such thing had blown up in his face, and now he had people after him. From the sound of it, Vince was fearing for his life this time.

He wouldn't discuss the specifics, but Vince was talking like a man under the gun in a very literal sense. Howard had never seen his friend like this before. Yeah, he got a little anxious from time to time because of the messes he'd get himself in, but now he was as nervous as a squirrel. His head was on a swivel, his panicked eyes darting left and right, and his whole body flinching at every little noise. Nervous sweat was pouring off his body. He appeared as frightened as a man could be.

Which gave Howard his opportunity.

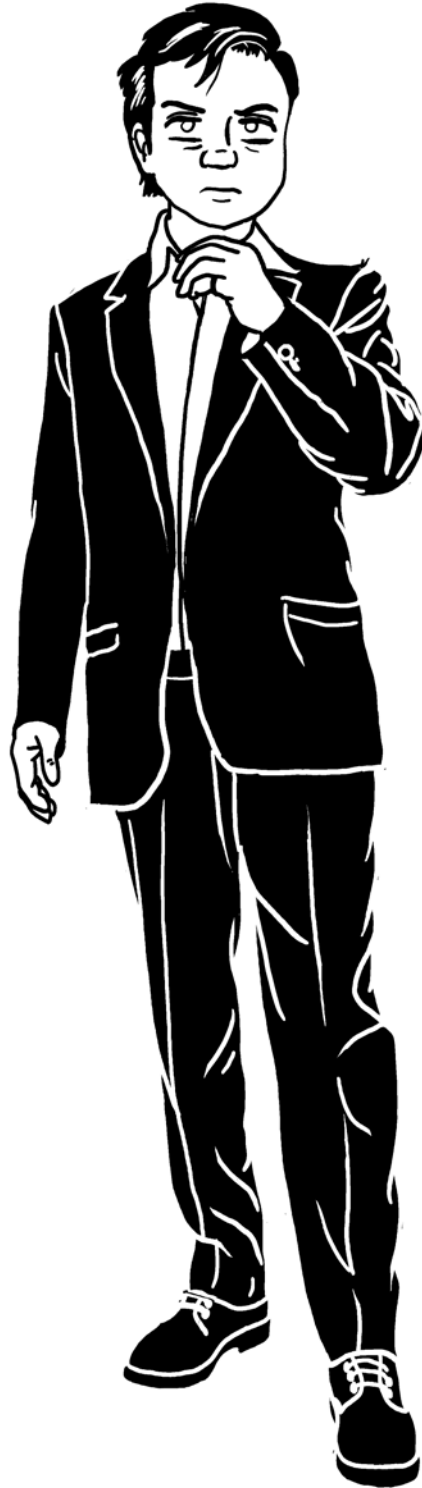
When Howard graduated college three years ago, he had his diploma, and nothing else. He could find no work for his mixed majors of music theory and applied psychology. He hadn't exactly planned on those as majors, he just kinda wound up with them. At the time, he was pretty well convinced that he had just wasted five years of college and hundreds of thousands of dollars. Still, he had managed to put his odd skills to use by recording some subliminal message discs for his own personal use to help him sleep better at night and quit smoking. It dawned on him one day he could probably sell the discs and make some money. That's exactly what he would up doing, and now he made a tidy living from it.

The kicker was that his little subliminal discs actually seemed to work. He had testimonials from consumers to doctors that they did what they advertised. Which got his mind churning – what *else* could he do with them? How powerful *were* they?

Howard had always had that tiny corner of his mind that was been whispering wicked things to him – everyone does. There, in the night, alone with your thoughts, the strangest things can happen inside your head. Most ignore those voices. Unfortunately, Howard, for whatever reason, had started listening to the whispers. Listening very carefully. The things it said to him were so tempting. So tempting that he had even made plans. Detailed plans. Plans that waited patiently for execution. Waited for the opportunity.

He had never thought that he'd really, truly be able to follow through on them. In fact, the whole prospect did scare him quite a bit. He wasn't a man without common sense. Yet Howard was able to hang on to his strange little dream, and he had dispensed with his misgivings, and overcome his timidity. He just needed a subject.

So now, through unknown cosmic machinations, he had a subject. He was alone.



Alone in his own small house, out here on the outskirts of the city, away from the rest of the world. Isolated. This person was afraid, vulnerable, he was willing to do what Howard asked, and he wasn't going to be missed.

Howard examined Vince, standing ungainly in his underwear and frayed shirt. He still didn't see anything really different about him. He looked the same as he did when he turned up on his doorstep. "Listen to the music a little more, Vince." Howard said, handing him a new CD. "It'll help calm you down."

"Yeah," Vince said, still shaking a little bit from fright. "Calm me down." He checked the CD. It was titled "Program 002: Open to New Ideas."

Howard watched him slip the headphones back on. His plan was just beginning.

Program 002: Open to New Ideas

Program 003: Silk and Lace

“Anything!” Vince insisted for the third time, “and I mean *anything*.”

Howard tried to make it look like he was trying to spontaneously brain-storm the idea he had already been planning for years now. “You’d do *anything* to hide?” He repeated what Vince had been saying zealously.

“Yes!” Vince declared again.

“So... How do you feel about a disguise?” He said.

“A disguise?” Vince said with interest.

“From what you’ve told me, Vince, these guys can get to you anywhere you go.”

“Right, right. These guys are... Connected,” Vince said, cautiously.

That meant the mob. Howard wasn’t stupid. “So if there’s nowhere you can go, you just need to disappear entirely.”

“Right. I’m following you.” Vince seemed ready for any suggestion, no matter how wild.

“The most reasonable thing to do would be to give you a new identity. A complete wash of the old Vincent Matinelli.”

“Yeah,” Vince’s expression brightened. He obviously liked the idea. “They can’t kill somebody that doesn’t exist.”

“Exactly. We’d need to give you a whole new name and identity. One that’s the farthest possible thing from who you are now.”

“Like a Mexican or an Italian guy or something.”

“You’re not Italian?” Howard asked. He could swear he was.

“Albanian.”

“Whatever.” Howard continued on his train of thought. “We’re going to need to do more than just change your backstory, Vince.” Howard hesitated for a moment knowing that this was going to be tricky. “I think for right now, we’ve got to take extreme measures until we can get you in the clear.”

“Extreme?” Vince said skeptically. “Well, extreme doesn’t bother me.”

“How do you feel about wearing a dress?”

Vince’s features were screwed up by the shock. His nose scrunched, an eye squinted, a corner of his mouth crinkled. “Uh, yeah. I don’t know, Howard. That’s...” He searched for the word. “That’s just... Dumb.”

“Not forever, of course, just a temporary disguise until we can get you someplace safe and set you up in a new life,” Howard said, reassuringly.

“But dressing as a woman is... is...” He was till hesitant. “Really... Bizarre”

Howard hadn’t won his argument, but the very fact that Vince was even debating the subject told him that his subliminal messages had taken root. No man would even stand for such a wild proposal as Howard had just made – but here Vince was, trying to think it through, as if it was realistic. All he needed to do was to keep it sounding reasonable enough. “Vince, the guy they are looking for can’t easily be disguised. We can have you grow a beard, but that takes time. We can dye your

hair or shave your head, but that isn't enough of a change. We need to do something extreme, and we need to do it now."

Vince shook his head and got up from his seat to try and end the conversation. "I don't know, Howard. I really don't know."

"Just think about it, Vince. You'll see my point." Howard said.

"I don't like it, Howard. I can't see myself doing that." He looked around as he walked back to the guest room. "Have you seen my headphones?" He asked.

"There they are." Howard pointed out with a smile. "And a new disc." He handed him a CD titled "Program 004: Embrace a New You."

"That's kind of a suggestive title, Howard." Vince said with a smirk.

"They're just titles."



Program 004: Embrace a New You

Program 005: Never Hold Back!

“Are you sure this is gonna work?” Vince asked.

Howard was terse in his response. “It’s not going to work unless you stop resisting it, Vince.”

They had been fussing for a while, trying to jam Vince’s body into some female clothing. Vince was a medium-sized man, about a hair under five eight, and in was in his late twenties. His body had been well maintained, and his muscles were big and noticeable. Howard was sure that was the way Vince liked it, being a ladies’ man and all.

“But I don’t think I can really look like a woman. I don’t care what kind of clothes you dress me in.” Vince said. He had a point, too, Howard admitted. His friend was quite recognizable as a man in a blouse. But time would change that.

“Do you want to get caught, Vince? Is that it?” Howard wasn’t going to let Vince think about it too much.

“No, of course not. But why do I have to wear a skirt? Not all women wear skirts you know.”

Howard had to be clear and deliberate with everything he said. “We need to make sure that no one recognizes you. We can only do that if we go all the way.”

Vince reluctantly nodded comprehension. Somewhere in his mind, it had seemed like a plausible explanation. The music was working well.



Program 006: Why Fight It? / Why Not Try It?

Program 007: Trust

Vince was lying on the couch, reading and listening to his headphones. His silky pink robe was the only thing that indicated he was trying to disguise himself at all. “What’s this?”

Howard handed a large bottle of various pills. “These are some pills to help, Vince.”

“Help how? What do they do?”

Howard acted as if it were nothing. “These are oral glucocorticosteroids and anti androgens.”

“Glucos what?” Vince asked, rightly puzzled.

“Never mind.” Howard said. Glucocorticosteroids, is what they were. He wasn’t lying. They were a type of medication that had among it’s many ‘side-effects’ a decrease in bone mass. Of course these particular derivatives wouldn’t leave the bones weak and brittle, but just cause them to soften and contract a bit. “I got them from my friend Dr. Earl Baumgartner. He works on experimental stuff down at the university. The point is that they will shrink your bones a little. About five percent. They’ll give you a more female size.”

Vince sat up, alarmed. “My bones? Shrink my bones!?! That’s going too far!”

Howard rolled his eyes. “It’s the perfect disguise – no one would look for someone smaller than they used to be. People think it’s impossible. It’s only temporary, Vince.”

“How can that be *temporary*?”

Howard scoffed at Vince’s dismay, making it sound so trivial. “Well, when you drink milk your bones grow, right? So when we’re done with your disguise, you can grow your bones back to normal. You know that.”

Vince wasn’t absolutely sure – but he seemed to be think it was a reasonable explanation. After all, he trusted Howard. “I guess that makes sense.”

“Sure it does.” He patted Vince on his shaved knee, reassuringly. “Sure it does.”

Program D: The Stranger

It was a few nights later when Vince came into the living room, in his pink robe, looking very nervous. "I think I hear someone outside, Howard."

"You're imagining things," Howard replied. "We're in the middle of nowhere."

Vince backed away from the windows, behind the sofa. "No, I really think there's someone out there."

Howard sighed and put down the book he was reading. "I'll go check."

"No! It's too dangerous!"

Howard went to a desk and pulled out a pistol. "I'll take your gun, Vince."

"But be careful!" He was paralyzed with fear. *Why didn't he just go out there and deal with it himself?* He asked himself. *What was wrong with him?*

Howard went out the front door and wandered around for a minute before going to the window next to Vince's room and turning off the speakers that made the "bump in the night" noises Vince had heard. Taking a few steps away from the house, Howard pointed the gun in the air and fired off two shots. He then made sure to rub some dirt on his pants and on his shirt. He wanted to look like he had been in a bit of a scuffle. He then sprinted back and forth, working up a good sweat.

He then returned to the house, breathless and flush. Vince was there, his eyes wild with fear. "Was that a shot!?"

"This big guy..." Howard paused



to catch his breath. "This big guy. He was out there, and he tried to attack me."

"Did he have a mustache!?" Vince asked, with a clear notion who it might be.

"Yes," Howard replied, going with it. "Yes he did."

"That's one of the guys after me!"

Howard went to the kitchen and poured himself a drink, to make it look good.

"That's what I figured." Howard drank his whole glass of whiskey on one dramatic gulp. "I shot him."

"Shot him!"

"I killed him, Vince. I carried his body into the dumpster and left it there. I don't think anyone saw me."

"We have to get the fuck outta here!"

"No!" Howard yelled. "We're not going anywhere, Vince. We stay right here. No one saw anything, and no one will suspect me. I'm a good citizen, I have no record."

"But what about me?"

"You're just a woman in my house. You have no connection to this."

"But what if they ask questions!?"

"We play it cool and take it easy. No one will even connect it to you or me."

Clearly panicking, Vince went for his room. "I'm getting out of here."

Howard blocked him with his body. "You stay put! I just shot and killed a man for you, and you owe it to me to keep your head and do what I tell you!"

The intensity on Howard's eyes seemed to have an effect on Vince. Never had he really thought of his old college friend as being so trustworthy and in command. But now, it just seemed obvious that Howard was the one in control of the situation. He backed away and calmed himself. "I guess you're right, Vince."

"Of course I am. Now take your pills and relax to your music." Howard said, putting his hand on Vince's shoulder. "Everything will be fine."

Vince nervously smiled back.

Program 009: Embrace A New Self

Program 010: French Lace

Program 011: Soft Surrender

“You said this was temporary, Howard,” Vince said, as he picked up the papers and cards on the table in front of him. He examined them all very carefully.

“Of course it is, Vince.”

Vince turned to Howard, clutching the documents he had been looking at. “Then why did you get all of these records changed?” Vince held certificates, identification cards, social security cards, tax records and even credit cards. All of them looked perfectly authentic.

Howard slowed down his speech to be clear. “Since we know those guys are looking for you, and I’ve already killed a man, I think we may have to do this a little while longer than we planned.”

Vince looked at Howard with anguish. His disbelieving eyes had a trace of mascara, making them look bigger. “How much longer?”

“Until the heat dies down,” Howard replied, hoping he wasn’t going to be asked what he meant by “heat.”

“But why did you go to all this trouble for a new name?” Vince examined a credit card closely. “I already look like a lot like a girl because of those pills you gave me.”

“Well, you’re a little smaller, a little shorter. But you don’t *quite* look like a real girl.”

“Smaller? Shorter?”

“I remember when those sweats just stopped at your ankles, now they almost cover your feet.”

Vince glanced down at his feet, the expression on his face making it obvious he hadn’t realized that fact, yet. “How far do we have to go, Howard?”

“As far as we need to.”

Vince looked nervous, but restrained. He was a far cry from the loud and



demonstrative man who came to his door not so long ago. “But I don’t want to *really* look like a girl, Howard.”

Howard got serious. “Both of our lives depend on it now, Vince.” He then scratched the stubble on his chin. “Or should I call you Georgette?”

“Couldn’t you have picked a better name? ‘Georgette le Criard?’ I don’t even know how to pronounce that.” He read the name on the ID card again. “And why do I have to be from France?”

“It’s harder to trace that way. If you’re a French national, those people after you won’t be able to trace your true identity.”

Vince tossed the documents on the table and got up. “This is nuts Howard. This will never work. I have to get out of here.”

“You stay right where you are! You lost your right to make your own decisions the moment you came through my door. This is my house, and these are my rules!”

“You can’t tell me what to do!” Vince shouted.

Howard no longer had any fear in confronting Vince. “I can and I *will!* I’ve *killed* a man for you, Vince, and now I’m as deep in this mess as you are! I’m not going to let you do something stupid and put my life in jeopardy!”

“But what you’re asking for is...”

“I’m not asking for anything anymore, Vince! I’m telling you! You’ll do what I want, and do it without making trouble! Don’t be so goddamned selfish! You’ve already messed up my life! Now you’ll help me fix it!”

Just like he expected, Vince’s resolve crumbled. “I’m sorry, Howard.”

“Sorry isn’t enough! You need to stop thinking about yourself all the time, and think about others! You’re ruining everyone’s life you’re touching! You’re a curse!” He drove it all home. He wanted to push Vince as far as he could. Those messages should have removed any resistance by now.

“I... I... I’m sorry, Howard. I really am.” Vince said, his voice breaking. “Oh God, I’m so sorry!”

“You don’t care about anyone but yourself!”

“Don’t say that!” Vince said, sniffing.

“Are you crying?”

“No,” Vince warbled.

“Well, it sounds like you are. You’re nothing more than a sissy inside, Vince. You deserve to be wearing skirts.”

“You don’t have to be so... So *cruel!*” Vince said, wiping away a tear.

Howard was delighted with this reaction. It was so feminine. “Are you really crying? You’re pathetic.”