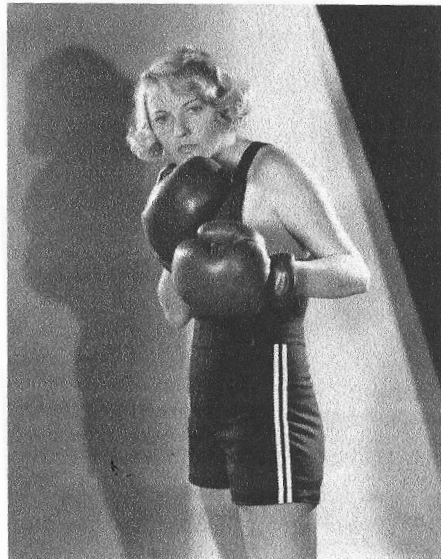


Moxie

Issue
#1

Free
///

Moxie Girls
Fight Back!





Hey ladies!



are you tired of a certain group of male students telling you to "Make me a sandwich!" when you voice an opinion in class?

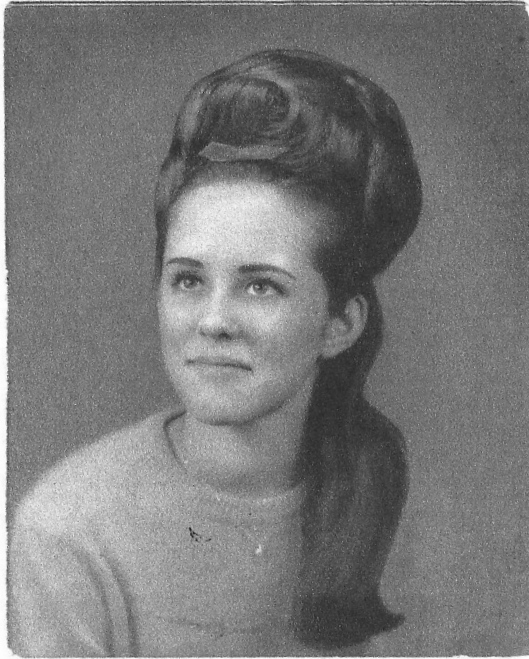
Are you tired of the football team getting tons of attention & getting away with anything they want?

Are you tired of gross comments & disgusting T-shirts?

★
THE GIRLS OF MOXIE
ARE TIRED TOO!!!



What would
East Rockport High
look like if
MOXIE was in
charge ???



Attention Grrrls of
★ East Rockport High! ★

If the words you've read
make sense to you - draw
some ♥s and ★s on your
hands before school next

FRIDAY OCTOBER 5

Find girls who feel like you!



CHAPTER

5

A school super early in the morning feels haunted. It doesn't look all that different on the outside, but without teenage bodies filling its halls and slamming its lockers, it seems like a cavernous, creepy space on the outskirts of some parallel universe, full of the spirits of teenage dreams that died sad, tragic deaths involving multiple choice quizzes and prom night disasters. All I can do as I pull open a side door is shake off the weirdness and hope there isn't anyone inside to catch me.

I pick the language hall as my secret entry point. I know the head custodian Mr Casas gets here crazy early to unlock the doors and turn on the lights and power up the air conditioning or the heat – both always seem to break on the hottest and coldest days of the year, respectively. It's not technically against the rules to be here at six thirty on a Monday morning, but if this plan of mine is going to work, no one can see me.

My heart thrumming, I slide into the first girls' bathroom I see. Once inside, I take a breath and reach inside my backpack for my copies of *Moxie*. My hand slips around a stack of about twenty zines, then pauses. If I pull them out and put them down and walk out, I can't take it back. Not with the early bell ringing in thirty minutes.

The plink plink of a drippy sink taunts me in the background.

You. Can't.You. Can't.You. Can't.

I'm a girl who studies for tests. I'm a girl who turns in homework on time. I'm a girl who tells her grandparents she'll be over in five minutes and shows up in three. I'm a girl who doesn't cause a fuss. I even shrink into my desk when a teacher calls on me in class. I'm a girl who would prefer to evaporate into the ether rather than draw even positive attention to herself.

Drip. Drip. Drip.You. Can't.You. Can't.

Total truth? Sometimes I catch myself lip-syncing lyrics into the mirror alone in my bedroom, and I get embarrassed for myself even though there's no one there to see me but my own reflection.

DripDrip. DripDrip. DripDrip.YouCan't.YouCan't.YouCan't!

If I get caught distributing *Moxie*, I can only guess what kind of punishment Principal Wilson will dream up. A zine criticizing his precious school would definitely earn me a huge, public punishment. Way worse than anything that would have happened to my mother when she walked down the hallways of this very building with illegal blue hair. I glance at the lady boxer on the cover of *Moxie*, trying to channel her total badass attitude.

But damn it! I'm dutiful Vivian, and I'm going to be dutiful on this, too. After all, these zines exist because I made them. They're real. I can't stop now.

And with my breath held, I slide the stack onto the windowsill, just underneath the filmy first-floor windows that the girls crack open sometimes so they can smoke without getting caught.

There. It's done. I look at the copies for a moment, trying to imagine how they'll appear to someone who has no idea where they came from. Hopefully like a Christmas present. Or a treasure hunt clue.

Walking quickly through the hallways, my mind running excuses as to why I'm here so early (*I'm supposed to meet a teacher to make up a quiz. I wanted to see my college counselor. I had insomnia so I decided, what the hell, I might as well get here early*). I stop at each girls' bathroom and drop off stacks of *Moxie* until there's only one copy left. I never see Mr Casas or any other adult. Finally, I make it to my locker and slide the final remaining issue underneath some old spirals.

The first bell rings, and it's not long until bodies start streaming into the building as the sun rises. As I walk to American history, I scan the faces of my classmates, wondering if every girl I spot has already been inside a bathroom. Wondering if an issue of *Moxie* is tucked inside a notebook or folded inside the back pocket of a well-worn pair of jeans. I feel my heart pulsing, full of something important.

I take my seat in the second to last row as the bell rings, and Claudia runs in a beat later, sliding into the seat next to me. Our teacher Mrs Robbins is fiddling around with papers at her desk. She doesn't even look up to greet us.

Our friend Sara is seated in front of us, and she takes advantage of Mrs Robbins's lack of preparation to turn around and face Claudia and me. It's then that I see a copy of *Moxie* in her hands. I can feel my cheeks redden and tip my head forward so my hair covers my cheeks.

'Did y'all see this?' Sara asks.

Claudia reaches her hand out. 'No, what is it?'

Sara hands the zine over, and I watch as Claudia's eyes skim the words I wrote Friday night while she was half-heartedly cheering the East Rockport Pirates on to a win over Refugio.

'Whoa,' Claudia says.

'What is it?' I ask instead, praying I look normal as I peer over Claudia's shoulder.

'See for yourself,' Claudia says and I lean over the zine so I can read my own creation. I try to contort my face into one of surprise and curiosity.

'Huh,' I manage. I feel so unnatural I can't believe they're not all staring at me.

But my friends' eyes are on the zine. 'It's totally right on,' Sara says. 'I mean, all of this is totally accurate. But I wonder who made it? Like, who are these Moxie girls it's talking about? Are they some sort of club or something?'

'Did you see the thing on the back?' Claudia asks. 'About

coming to school on Friday with stars and hearts on your hands?’ She shrugs and raises her eyebrows. ‘Not sure what the hell that’s going to accomplish.’

Claudia’s words sting because it hits me that I never really thought about what the stars and hearts are going to do. Riot Grrrls used to do similar things to help like-minded girls find each other at punk shows. But I’m not sure what the girls with decorations on their hands will do on Friday. I’m not sure any girls will show up to school with their hands marked up at all.

‘I guess it’s cool it got made, at least,’ I say, fishing for some validation.

‘Too bad Mitchell Wilson and his asshole friends won’t even realize it exists when they’re the ones who need to read it,’ Claudia says. ‘Here.’ She tosses *Moxie* over Sara’s shoulder and slumps back in her seat as Mrs Robbins heads over to her podium to begin her millionth lecture on the Teapot Dome Scandal or something else equally mind-paralyzing.

When the bell rings to end class, Sara leaves *Moxie* behind on her desk as if it’s a forgotten homework assignment. I resist the urge to pick it up and take it with me like some sort of overprotective mother.

By the time I walk into English class with Mr Davies, I feel like a firecracker dud. I’ve seen a few girls with a copy of *Moxie* in their hands, but since Sara and Claudia in first period, I haven’t heard anyone talk about it. A visit to the one of the girls’

bathrooms reveals half a stack of *Moxie* zines sitting sadly on the counter, one haphazardly knocked to the floor, a faint footprint right on the front cover. People seem more excited to discuss the Pirates' win and the upcoming game against Port Aransas this week.

But as I take my seat in English, I spot Lucy Hernandez in the front row with a copy of *Moxie* in her hands, her lips locked tight and her brow furrowed as she reads the inside. She flips the zine over to read the back. Then she opens it and reads the whole thing again. I can't help but watch her as she studies it, and I catch the tiniest sliver of a smile break out on her face.

The bell rings, and Mr Davies walks in. I'm resigning myself to beginning the worst class of the day when I notice that following him is the new boy from the pep rally. The artists' son from Austin. Seth Acosta.

'Uh, hey?' Seth says to Mr Davies's back. Mr Davies turns around and stares at Seth.

'Yes?'

'I'm new,' he says, handing Mr Davies a slip of paper. 'I just got put in this class.' His voice is low and thick.

As Mr Davies looks over Seth's schedule, I hear snickering coming from the back of the room. Mitchell and his beefy, empty-headed buddies are cracking up, probably because Seth is new and dresses like he's from Austin and not East Rockport, and this must be amusing to them. But Mitchell Wilson could live a thousand lives and never attain the perfection that is Seth

Acosta in his sleeveless Sonic Youth T-shirt and perfectly tousled black hair.

‘Take a seat, Seth,’ Mr Davies instructs, nodding toward the desks. Seth chooses an empty one in a corner nowhere near me. He chews on a thumbnail and stares blankly at the chalkboard while I try not to stare too much. I wonder what he had for breakfast and which Sonic Youth song is his favorite and whether or not he’s ever had sex with anyone before.

That last thought turns my breathing shallow.

Mr Davies begins a lesson that is only slightly less boring than Mrs Robbins’s from first period, and I spend my time gazing from Seth to my notebook where I’m trying to take notes. Seth takes notes, too, which makes me think he’s smart or at least cares about doing well in school, which is a turn on, honestly, even if I’m pretty sure that East Rockport High is not a place that makes anyone smarter.

I’m so consumed with watching Seth that I almost don’t notice that Lucy has a copy of *Moxie* sitting on the corner of her desk. But about halfway through the tedious fifty minute class I see it perched there, like a good luck charm. She leaves it there through the whole lecture, but she keeps her mouth shut the entire class, even when Mr Davies asks questions, so I guess she’s learned her lesson. I can’t help think, however, that there’s something deliberate about the way she keeps *Moxie* visible, and it’s sort of cool.

Finally, Mr Davies sits down at his desk to zone out on his computer while we’re allegedly ‘working independently’ (actually

messing around with our phones as surreptitiously as possible). That's when Mitchell Wilson gets up from the back row where he's almost certainly been sleeping without consequence and waltzes up to the front of the room to throw something away in the garbage can. On his way back, in one smooth motion, Mitchell slides *Moxie* into his hand and takes it back to his desk. Lucy whips her head around, her mouth in an O as if she's about to speak, but then she just shuts her lips tight and turns toward the front of the room. I catch her crushed expression in profile, even though her face is half hidden behind curls.

'What the hell is this?' Mitchell says over the snap of paper that must be him opening the zine. I don't turn around. It's one thing to criticize Mitchell in the pages of *Moxie*. But being in his sightline as he reads my words makes my *Moxie* secret terrifying instead of thrilling.

'The girls of *Moxie* are tired?' he asks. 'Maybe they should take a nap then.' The guys sitting next to him respond with a chorus of heh-hehs.

I glance over at Mr Davies who seems to sort of startle awake at his desk. He glances at the clock.

'OK, hey, y'all . . . you can chat for the last few minutes of class, but keep it down, please.'

Great. Now the hounds have really been released.

'OK, wait a minute, listen to this,' Mitchell continues as most of the class shifts in their seats, leaning in toward him. Even Seth is looking over his shoulder, his dark eyes taking in the goon in the back row. Maybe not turning around actually

makes me look suspicious. I crane my neck and see Mitchell's eyes skimming the pages of *Moxie*. My pages.

'Are you tired of a certain group of male students telling you to "Make me a sandwich!" when you voice an opinion in class?' he reads, then looks up, his grin spreading wide like he's just been named All-American. 'Hey, that's me!' He shrugs his shoulders all guilty-as-charged. *Sorry not sorry!*

'Wait, read that one,' says Alex Adams, another football player in the back row. He points a finger at *Moxie* and smacks at it once, then twice, enjoying himself. 'Read that last part.'

I'm trying to keep my face normal and neutral, but I'm pushing my feet into the bottom of my shoes so hard one of them squeaks against the tiled floor.

'OK, let me,' Mitchell agrees. 'It says, "Are you tired of the football team getting tons of attention and getting away with anything they want?"' Mitchell laughs out loud like he's just read the Earth is flat or time travel exists. (Actually, Mitchell might be dense enough to think those things are true.) 'Is this thing serious? They're pissed we're doing our job and winning football games? I'm sorry, I didn't realize I was supposed to lose so a bunch of girls don't feel all sad and shit.'

Cackle cackle, heh-heh, belchy, burpy dumb-boy noises follow, but the truth is some of the other kids in the class are smiling and laughing, too. Even some of the girls.

Mitchell leans forward in his seat toward Lucy, who is packing her stuff inside her backpack. She stares up at the clock like she's willing it to speed up.

‘Hey, new girl,’ he says in the general direction of Lucy’s back. ‘New girl, turn around, I have a question for you.’

Lucy’s shoulders sink just a bit. But she turns around.

‘Yeah?’ she says.

‘You write this?’ Mitchell asks, waving *Moxie* around between his fingers.

Lucy waits a beat longer than she needs to before offering a cold and clipped, ‘No’ and then turns around to continue packing up.

‘There were copies in all the girls’ bathrooms this morning,’ someone says. Mitchell shrugs again, his gaze on Lucy. It lingers for too long.

‘Whatever, it’s a bunch of shit,’ Mitchell mutters under his breath. He crumples *Moxie* in his quarterback hands and tosses it toward the front of the room where it bounces off the whiteboard.

‘Please, let’s use the trash can,’ Mr Davies says, coming to life briefly.

The bell rings at last, and I catch Seth making a break for the door, not looking back.

In the crowded hallway, I find myself bumping up against Lucy. She has her eyes fixed forward, her mouth a firm line.

‘Hey,’ I say, my voice low. ‘I have an extra copy of that thing if you want it. My locker’s right there.’

Lucy turns, surprised, her eyebrows popping up.

‘Yeah?’ she asks.

‘Sure.’

She stands off to the side as I fiddle with my combination, and once I find the one copy of *Moxie* I saved, I hand it to her.

‘Thanks,’ she says, grinning. ‘This thing is so cool.’

‘Yeah, it is pretty interesting,’ I answer.

‘I didn’t make it, you know,’ she says. ‘Do you know who did?’

I shake my head no. If I speak she’ll know I’m lying.

‘That Mitchell guy is a complete asshole,’ Lucy says, and when she says it I find my eyes darting up and down the hall, double checking that Mitchell isn’t nearby. It pisses me off that my first reaction is to make sure he can’t hear us, but I don’t want to get caught by him and become the next brunt of his jokes. He scares me too much.

‘He can kind of do whatever he wants around here,’ I offer, my voice quieter than it needs to be.

‘I’ve figured that out,’ Lucy says, arching one eyebrow. ‘Anyway, thanks for this.’ She tucks *Moxie* inside a notebook. ‘Hey, what’s your name again?’

‘Vivian,’ I tell her. ‘People call me Viv.’

‘Right, I thought so. You never really talk in class, so I wasn’t sure.’

I shrug, not sure how to respond at first. ‘I don’t think talking in that class gets you anywhere,’ I finally manage.

‘Seriously,’ she says. ‘Anyway, I’m Lucy. And as that asshole pointed out, I’m new this year.’

I smile and nod. ‘Yeah, I know.’ I’m not sure what else I’m supposed to say. In East Rockport I run into so few new people.

Lucy smiles back, but when I don't say anything else, she offers me a little half wave and starts off down the hall. I raise a hand goodbye, and it's not until she's filtered through the crowd that I realize I could have asked her where she was from or why her family moved here. I could even have asked her if she was planning on coloring stars and hearts on her hands this Friday as *Moxie* instructed.

I stare down at my own bare hands and realize I need to answer that same question for myself.