I’m a working mom from a lower blue-collar background (and that’s putting it mildly). I live in a horseshoe-shaped town in Idaho. I’m from the country, I sell clothing and accessories to women in the country, and I love being from, in, and for the country. Thanks to some book called *Hillbilly Elegy*, there’s a perception in cities like New York (where my editor lives) that people in small towns should be pitied, because we’re too stupid and lazy to know our lives would be better in the city. Well, I don’t believe that at all. I’ve lived in Texas. I’ve lived in Boise. I live in New Plymouth, Idaho, population 1,538, because I want to live here. I want to raise my kids here. And I run a company for all the women in all the little towns like New Plymouth who feel the same way.

This book isn’t for the CEOs, the Wall Streeters, or the TED Talkers. It’s for the mom-and-pops fighting for the money to open tomorrow. The business owners working fifteen hours a day, six days a week, to put food on the table. The wives running companies out of their bedrooms to keep their families afloat. The moms working double shifts and selling cosmetics on the side. The factory workers. The mail carriers. The people living on the backroads, and I don’t just mean in rural areas, I mean any place that is overlooked and discounted, where the hustle is harder and each dollar means more. Most of us don’t get $10,000, and definitely not $100,000, to get started on our dreams. Most of us don’t even get emotional support. So this book is for you: the strivers, the hustlers, the never-give-uppers who never had savings, investors, or outside help, because that’s my story, too.

This book is for the moms working sixty hours a week selling cars or slinging trays so their children can have a better life. I’ve been there. I know how it is. I know it can feel like people look down on you, no matter how successful you are. I will never look down on you, girl. You’re my hero.

Being a Boss Lady isn’t about money, after all. It’s not about glamour—thank God, because I am the opposite of glamorous—or a big idea that changes the world. I didn’t start an Internet company. I didn’t even start a website, although I have a very successful one now. I founded a retail store, in a small brick building with a big plate-glass window, across the street from the Double Diamond Saloon. That seemed like such a bad idea even the local bank wouldn’t give me a loan. They said, “You can’t open a shop in New Plymouth, Jessi. There’s so little traffic we drive lawnmowers down the main street.”
“Sure,” I said, “but only during the co-op races, and that’s two days a year.”

They still said no.

I built Cheekys anyway, and to this day, despite more than $20 million in sales, I have never been approved for a bank loan for my business. I have never been offered money by an outside investor, although my best friend (we were single moms together) has been a silent partner since day one. I still run the business out of New Plymouth, even though it has exploded worldwide. In 2012, Cheekys’ total revenue was $43,000. For the year. That’s gross, not net. Six years later, our revenue is $125,000 every week. Our sales are increasing by more than $100,000 a month. By next year, at our current growth rate, we’ll hit a million dollars a month in sales.

Now let me be clear: that doesn’t make me rich. I still don’t have money in my bank account or the backyard pool I’ve been dreaming of since I was a little girl. Okay, I have a pool, but it’s the collapsible aboveground kind from Bi-Mart, which my husband says is barely better than the way we did it when we were kids: rainwater in a stock tank. (I don’t wanna spend this whole book explaining terms, so if you’re in the city and don’t know what a stock tank is, get your Google on.) My husband and I, who both work at Cheekys full time, make $2,000 a month, and we only started paying ourselves in 2016. At one point, Justin became frustrated by that. Our Yukalade—the half Yukon, half Escalade body-shop special we’d been driving for ten years—had broken down again.

“Jessi,” he said, “everyone who works for Cheekys has a new car but us.”

“Yup,” I said. “And we provided those opportunities, Justin. We helped those families thrive. Doesn’t that make you feel good?”

Call me crazy, but I take more joy in knowing Erika can care for her five children, including two she took in after her brother died of cancer way too young, and the other Erica can buy a minivan for her growing family, than I ever would in a swimming pool.