

A pocketful of power

Flamin' heck!

When Lauren split with her husband and he filed for divorce she believed her life was over.

They had been married for 10 years and had two children together and she'd hoped they could work things out.

When that didn't happen, she was devastated.

'There were times when I'd wake up every morning and cry and when I thought my life wouldn't improve,' Lauren, 31, says.

But when their divorce was finalised, Lauren wanted to mark the occasion.

She decided to use a very important symbol of her marriage to do that — her wedding dress.

With the help of her mum, Felicia, and her best friend, she organised a very unique photoshoot.

On the day of the



Lauren

shoot, she put her white wedding dress on over a vibrant red dress and was photographed cutting off the bridal gown before setting it alight.

'I felt empowered,' Lauren says. 'I was worried there might be a moment when I was sad. It is the end of the marriage I thought I'd have forever. But I didn't and it was fun.'

Lauren also hoped burning her wedding dress would send a message to other women that there is life and happiness after divorce.

'As women we're told that no matter what, we are supposed to stay and keep our family together, so many women struggle with divorce,' she says. 'We should not be made to feel ashamed. I'm very happy now. You will get through the other side.'

Lauren Brooke, 31



Burning her dress

Clothes are one of life's essentials, but these women delved into their wardrobes and found something more...

One life-changing dress

I opened the wardrobe and seeing the rail tightly packed with clothes, I sighed.

'What's up?' my mum Marva asked.

'These dresses are just sitting here, gathering dust. It's such a shame,' I replied.

I'd always loved clothes and over the years I'd accumulated so many dresses I'd had to use Mum's wardrobe as an overflow to my own!

And now we were in the midst of the Covid-19 lockdown, they weren't getting any use at all.

Although I knew I should probably have a clear out, I loved them all too much to part with them.

But when the restrictions began to ease, I had an idea that would give my frocks an airing — and earn me some extra cash too.

'I'm going to try renting them out to people,' I told Mum.

I took my favourite Rixo rainbow dress and listed it on a rental site called Hurr Collective.

Days later, someone asked to rent it, so I packaged it up and sent it off in the post.

When it came back on time and in perfect condition a few



Lisa

days later, I was thrilled.

Maybe I could make something of this, I thought.

Over the next months, I scoured my wardrobe for more dresses to list.

I uploaded around 20 pieces — and was soon inundated with people wanting to rent them.

As time went on, I managed to build a following on social media.

Women from all over began to get in touch with me, asking for advice on how I manage to make so much from renting out my wardrobe.

But one woman's message leapt out. She said she'd seen



Lisa with her Rixo rainbow dress

my Instagram and it inspired her to rent her own clothes out.

The £1000 she'd made meant she was able to leave an abusive relationship.

'I can't believe how much I've impacted someone's life,' I said to Mum.

'That's amazing, love,' she replied. 'Think how many others you could inspire.'

It got me thinking and soon after, I started my own online course on renting clothes. I'm hoping to help other women empower themselves to use something they love to become financially stable.

So far, I've built up a nest egg of £7000 — and if I can do it, they can too! I've already had 20

people join my course, and through it I've created a community of like-minded ladies who want to better their lives — all while being sustainable!

I'm also in the process of releasing my own book which talks about how fashion has helped me improve my finances.

Who'd have known that one dress would've had such an impact on my life — and other women's, too!

From Lisa Maynard-Atem, 46, of Manchester

● To find out more about Lisa, follow her on Instagram @stylisa

'It was meant to be!'

As I sorted through my daughter Indie-Rose's old baby clothes, I wondered what to do with them.

I can't believe she used to fit in these, I thought, lifting up tiny sleepsuits and cute little dresses.

She was still only 10 months old, but had already outgrown a heap of clothes.

As much as they made lovely reminders of how tiny Indie-Rose once was, I didn't need them any more, but they might help out another new mum.

So I listed the bundle on a local selling group and soon after, a woman called Angela messaged me to ask if it was still available.

It is, I replied, and sent her my address.

Later that day, she came round to pick up the clothes.

'Thank you for these, it's a huge help!' she said, smiling.

'No worries,' I replied. 'Also, talk about a small world, my sister lives just across the road from you!' she said, chuckling.

'No way!' I replied.

We chatted for a bit about our little ones — Angela had a daughter too, called Isla — and we hit it off.

And as she left, Angela said: 'Maybe see you around.' Just in that brief chance

meeting, I felt we'd connected, so a couple of days later, I texted Angela.

Do you and Isla want to come to the baby group me and Indie-Rose go to? I asked.

I'd love to! she replied.

The next day, Angela and Isla came along and, after chatting some more, we became firm friends.

Now, seven years on, we're still best mates — and our girls are too!

They go to the same school and we arrange regular playdates and sleepovers so Angela and I can catch up too!

Looking back, it feels like our friendship was meant to be. Fate — and a bag of clothes — brought us together.

From Helen Brown, 39, of Kilmarnock, E Ayr



Angela and me



Indie-Rose and Isla