



Story & Photography by Shyarah Thomas



# AUDREY LIZ

## Fashion Empowerment for Women on a Journey

In the city of Louisville, Kentucky, a young and ambitious woman named Lauren Hemker embarked on a journey that would not only fulfill her passion for fashion but also empower women facing a challenging battle. Armed with degrees in Fashion Merchandising and Psychology from Indiana University, Lauren's path led her to become a corporate

buyer for a regional store in Milwaukee upon graduation. This experience would lay the foundation for her own business venture, Audrey Liz, in collaboration with her mother Carol Hemker. However, the road to success was not without its twists and turns, as Lauren navigated the intricacies of running her own business and connecting with the right vendors to bring her vision to life.

### A Journey Back Home

After several years in Milwaukee, Lauren's life took an unexpected turn when her mother, Carol Hemker, was diagnosed with invasive lobular breast cancer. On her birthday, of all days, Carol received the news that would change their lives forever. Fortunately, the cancer was caught before it could metastasize, sparing Carol from further complications. However, this experience hit close to home for Lauren, as she herself carries genetic signs of breast cancer. With her mother's health at the forefront of her mind, Lauren made the decision to move back to Louisville, where she could provide the support and care her mother needed during this challenging time.

### Finding Strength in Community

Settling into the welcoming embrace of the Norton Commons neighborhood, Lauren found solace in the sense of security, safety, and community that surrounded her. It was here that she would lay the foundation for her passion project, Audrey Liz. Launched in February 2020, Audrey Liz emerged as a brand dedicated to empowering women who have undergone breast cancer surgeries, such as mastectomy and lumpectomy. The brand's mission is simple yet profound: to provide recovery garments that not only offer comfort but also instill a sense of confidence during the healing process.

### A Personal Journey of Empathy

Audrey Liz was not just a business venture for Lauren; it was a deeply personal endeavor born out of her mother's own experiences during her surgeries. Witnessing her mother's struggle, Lauren

was inspired to create garments that women would genuinely want to wear, rather than settling for the standard-issue options provided during their surgeries. The idea for Audrey Liz had been brewing within Lauren for three years before its official launch, she and her mother even patented it. The name "Audrey Liz" was a heartfelt tribute, combining Lauren's middle name (Audra), her mother's middle name (Elizabeth), and her grandmother's name (Audrey Elizabeth). This fusion of generations is also reflected in the clothing line itself, which seamlessly blended conservative elements with modern and fashionable designs.

### Overcoming Challenges, One Hospital at a Time

Running a business always comes with its fair share of obstacles, and for Lauren, one of the biggest challenges was spreading

the word about Audrey Liz to women who needed it most. In a niche market like this, timing is crucial, as women require these recovery garments before their surgeries. To tackle this hurdle head-on, Lauren embarked on a personal mission, traveling to different hospitals to ensure that information about Audrey Liz's recovery garments were included in patient care packets. By doing so, she aimed to ensure that every woman undergoing treatment was aware of the options available to them, providing a glimmer of hope and empowerment during their journey.

### A Love Story Born from Kindness

During the whirlwind of Audrey Liz and her personal journey, Lauren's life took an unexpected turn when she met Brian, her loving boyfriend of three years, now officially engaged this past Thanksgiving.

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women through fashion. She believes that every woman deserves to feel comfortable, confident, and beautiful, regardless of the challenges they may face. With Audrey Liz, Lauren is determined to be a beacon of hope and strength for women on their journey to recovery. A symbol of empowerment, resilience, and community, Audrey Liz is a testament to the power of fashion to uplift and inspire, and Lauren's journey is a testament to the strength and resilience of the human spirit.

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Their love story began with a blind date, set up by their friends Julie and Anthony who are now married. Lauren's fate was sealed the moment her furry companion, Paisley, burst out of the door and into the arms of Brian, a dashing stranger who had arrived at her home for a blind date. Little did Lauren know, this chance encounter would blossom into a beautiful relationship, as Brian's chivalrous act of saving Paisley from a potentially fatal fate left a lasting impression on her heart. Undeterred by the limitations of the Covid pandemic, the pair embarked on an adventure through Louisville, their hunger for love and life leading them to the welcoming embrace of Parlour Pizza in Indiana. Lauren has also become somewhat of an adopted UofL fan since attending football, basketball, and women's volleyball games with Brian and his family. Enriched by her shared experiences with Brian, whose love and adventurous spirit have become an integral part of her journey, add depth and beauty to her life's tapestry.

**A Fulfilling Journey**

Reflecting on her profession, Lauren is grateful for the opportunities it has provided and the fulfillment it brings. Knowing that she is doing something meaningful and impactful for other women gives her a sense of purpose and drives her to continue her mission with Audrey Liz. For Lauren, Audrey Liz is more than just a business; it is a source of immense fulfillment and enrichment. Knowing that she can make a positive impact on the lives of women facing such a tough battle fuels her drive and determination. Despite the demands of running Audrey Liz, Lauren finds solace and joy in the simple pleasures of life. Relishing in the great outdoors, indulging in her passion for decorating, and spending quality time with her loved ones. While there are a multitude of things that illuminate Lauren's world and fill it with joy, she has two furry friends, Paisley and Happy, who bring her endless happiness and companionship.

As Audrey Liz continues to grow and make a difference, Lauren remains committed to her vision of empowering

To learn more about Audrey Liz visit their website or call at: [www.AudreyLiz.com](http://www.AudreyLiz.com) 502-387-7137



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