

Women Who Say Yes to the Spark

A Story Series by Angie Thompson

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Ann-Janette Webster: Prospecting for Gold

On a warm Tulsa afternoon that has stayed with her all her life, a young girl stood in her aunt's backyard, rallying a pack of cousins and siblings with a gleam in her eye.

"Hey, I have an idea—let's play circus!"

Blankets became tent walls. A card table turned into a ticket booth. Someone sold popcorn. Someone else became a lion. Eight-year-old Ann-Janette Webster directed it all like a tiny producer with a grand vision, turning ordinary play into a full-blown production.

It was messy. It was loud. It ended with everyone in trouble for the state of the yard—and she loved every minute of it.

Even then, AJ was prospecting for joy—finding possibility in ordinary afternoons and turning chaos into color.

A Home Where Creativity Was the Language

AJ grew up surrounded by creativity in motion. Her parents—both musicians deeply involved in church music

ministry—produced elaborate programs, turning sanctuaries into stages and songs into stories. Through them, she learned that art wasn't decoration; it was revelation.

"I observed the way you can feel the Divine in art," she says. "It was beautiful. And I realized—I want to do this."

Her parents found lessons and outlets for every child—piano, voice, drama—anything that gave imagination room to breathe. Encouragement was loving and shared.

"When you feel that loved," AJ reflects, "you're willing to take risks."

At eight, she was already restless with classical piano drills. One afternoon she heard a melody in her head, wrote it on staff paper, and proudly played it for her piano teacher—only to have it curtly dismissed.

"I remember staring at the keys, pretending not to care," she says. "But something inside me went quiet."

It would be five years before she wrote another song. That



Ann-Janette Webster

silence taught her how fragile creativity can be—and how powerful words are.

"We can build people up or crush their souls," AJ says. "I want to be the person who encourages others."

The Risk Taker

That drive—to create, to encourage, to build—never left.

"I was born a risk taker," AJ says, her voice carrying both humor and certainty. She never wanted a single, linear path. Boredom, to her, is an internal signal that it's time to begin again.

She and her husband, Jay, share a lifelong creative partnership, beginning each new year with the same question: Is there anything we want to create that would bring more joy or help others?

They laugh about it—“Is this the year we have to get real jobs?”—but beneath the humor lies a deeper belief: curiosity is sacred, and every new idea carries possibility.

For many years, their corporate-video business brought stability and success. Over time, though, the joy that once fueled it began to wane.

“Walking away from steady income felt reckless,” AJ says. “But staying felt worse.”

“You don’t create to save the world—you create because it’s who you are.”

The decision wasn’t easy. There were long talks about faith and finances, moments of doubt and uncertainty. But staying in something that steadily drained their creative energy felt like the greater risk.

“You take baby steps,” she says. “You dare yourself. And you realize the payoff, for peace and joy, is worth it.”

When asked what holds most people back from following purpose, AJ doesn’t hesitate.

“People are afraid of what others will think—*how I look, how I sound, what they’ll say if I fall short*,” she says. Then she pauses. “But the things we imagine people saying about us—those judgments we fear—almost never happen.”

That perspective has shaped how she lives.

Success, Rewritten

Over time, that willingness to risk reshaped how AJ defined success.

There was a time when success meant scale—big audiences, big reach, big applause. But years in the creative trenches refined that dream into something quieter and truer.

“Early in my career, I wished more people could hear my songs,” she says. “Then I realized—if one person hears it and it helps them, that’s enough.”

That realization deepened as she read *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear* by Elizabeth Gilbert.

“One line hit me so hard,” AJ says. “You don’t create to save the world—you create because it’s who you are.”

“I don’t have to save the world with this song,” she realized. “I’m doing it because this is how God made me.”

It was a simple truth—one that

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Producer at Work

Setting up a video shoot on Chicago’s Lake Michigan while working on a pilot called *The American Dream: In the Hands of Generation X*.



Songs No One’s Heard began as a collection of original songs written without an agenda—created simply because they needed to exist.



Inspiring a Coalition

Alongside Jay, Ann-Janette helps lead *Dreamers Coalition*—bringing people together through creativity and shared purpose.



freed her from the need for outcomes or applause.

Quiet Seasons and Hidden Gold

With success redefined, AJ began to see quiet seasons not as emptiness, but as invitation.

“When it’s quiet, it’s hard,” she admits. “The worst feeling is when inspiration doesn’t come.”

She used to force it. Now, she listens.

“I can rest. Clean my closet. Clear out my hard drive. Take care of my mental health. And trust that the next thing will come.”

Creativity isn’t a faucet—it’s a tide. And when the water recedes, that’s when the gold dust settles.

“To be alive is to be creative,” AJ says. Creativity, to her, isn’t limited to art or music. It’s problem-solving. Kindness. Seeing potential where others overlook it.

“Every person is a reflection of

“We can build people up or crush their souls. I want to be the person who encourages others.”

their Maker,” she says. “What color on the palette are you?”

She calls it prospecting for gold—looking for beauty inside people who might not see it themselves.

A Life Made of Spark

From a blanket circus in her aunt’s backyard to a lifetime of writing, producing, performing, and dreaming, Ann-Janette Webster has followed the creative thread stitched inside her since childhood.

She has never chased the spotlight.

She has chased meaning.

The joy, for Ann-Janette Webster, isn’t in applause or outcomes.

It’s in the idea that asks to be shaped.

In the courage to begin again. In the choice to live creatively, honestly, and with purpose.

This is the work of a creative life, learning where to dig, and recognizing the gold when you see it.



A family moment at a book signing—Jay, Ann-Janette, and Evanjalyn celebrating their shared projects.

About Ann-Janette Webster

Ann-Janette Webster is a Bartlesville-based singer-songwriter, producer, and storyteller whose work spans music, film, and creative entrepreneurship. A University of Oklahoma graduate in Radio/Television/Film, she co-founded PioneerDream, Inc. with her husband, Jay, and together they lead the Dreamers Coalition, using art, conversation, and community to inspire purpose and joy. Her latest album *Songs No One’s Heard* features original music across multiple genres, reflecting her belief in living creatively from the heart. Offstage, she leads community projects, volunteers with Dreamers, and supports her daughter Evanjalyn’s growing artistic journey.

About the Writer and Permissions

Angie Thompson is a fundraising strategist and storyteller who helps nonprofits, organizations, and purpose-driven leaders communicate with intention and heart. Through Angie Thompson Consulting LLC and her Pivot Pulse™ storytelling framework, she supports people doing good work—and helps them get noticed for it.

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This story is based on a personal interview and reflections shared by Ann-Janette Webster and is published with permission. It is part of the *Women Who Say Yes to the Spark* series, created to celebrate leadership, creativity, and meaningful work.

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