

Our Man
in
Mexico

*Winston Scott and the
Hidden History of the CIA*

J E F F E R S O N M O R L E Y

Foreword by

M I C H A E L S C O T T



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Prologue: April 28, 1971

The day after she buried her husband in Mexico City, Janet Scott opened the front door of her house to find herself looking into the face of a man she loathed. James Jesus Angleton doffed his homburg and entered. He wore a black suit and a white shirt. Another man in a suit trailed him.

Janet Scott had known Jim Angleton for many years and rarely liked him. He had been a longtime friend of Scottie, as she called her late husband. Like Scottie, Angleton was a big deal in the CIA, the chief of the agency's Counterintelligence Staff. Janet knew why Angleton had come. He wanted something. Scottie had served for thirteen years as chief of the CIA's station in Mexico City, the largest office of U.S. intelligence operations in the Western Hemisphere and a frontline post in the Cold War against the Soviet Union. He wanted Win's secrets. Angleton's admirers thought him brilliant. Others shared Janet's keen distaste. Win's assistant, Anne Goodpasture, who had also worked at Angleton's side for several years, said Angleton was "weird, loosely put together," and she was not just talking about his gangly frame. Janet Scott's opinion was harsher. She told one of her sons that Angleton was a "drunken idiot." She underestimated him.

"Why did it take so long for you to come?" she asked sarcastically.

Angleton mumbled words of regret that Janet did not believe. He said the director, Richard Helms himself, sent his condolences, his regrets . . . that all of Win's friends . . . his service to his country . . . you know how sorry . . . the benefits to which you are entitled. . . . Angleton's hands were expressive. His aquiline face, made

sallow by the years, featured brown eyes glinting of a morning martini and much more.

Janet Scott was a handsome woman, forty years old, with olive skin, dark hair, and an air of bemused impatience. She wanted to be alone with the shock of her husband's sudden passing, and now she had to deal with this man.

"Of course our current information is tentative," Angleton coughed. He was talking about her benefits. Angleton was a master of arcane subjects, including CIA regulations. He wanted to refer her to competent staff from the legal counsel's office—"to ensure every advantage for your self and your children."

Janet had been around the CIA long enough—twenty-plus years—to recognize the sheathed blade of a polite threat: do what we say or we will cut off Win's pension. We have our ways of getting things.

"Did Win have a will?" Angleton asked.

"I don't know," she said. "I don't even know who Scottie's lawyer or executor is."

"Could you find out," he nodded at the man trailing him, "and let John know?"

God, how she hated him. It would have killed Scottie to see Jim Angleton in his house, in his living room, calling with his condolences.

"I have an unpleasant task," Angleton went on. "There were some papers."

Janet did not respond.

"Were you aware that Win was coming to Washington to see the director about his book?" Angleton asked.

"I knew he had written something," Janet countered. She was surprised Angleton knew about the book. "I haven't seen it," she said.

"You didn't read it?"

"He asked me to type it," Janet sneered. "I told him to go hire a girl."

"Janet, you do *not* want to read what Win wrote," Angleton said, as if doing a favor.

"Why not?"

"It discusses, in an open way, intimate matters of his first marriage."

Janet had thought the book a bad idea from the start, but Win considered himself a writer so. . . .

"The information in there would, if it was made public, violate two different secrecy agreements that he signed. Damn it, Janet, this is important. It would do great harm, grave harm, to our relationships with other governments, with some of our closest allies. Win wouldn't want that. It would disturb his friends."

Janet feared this bureaucratic ghoul. He looked like a man whose ectoplasm had run out.

"It would harm his reputation and his memory."

"I knew something was wrong when he told me he was going to see Helms," she said. "Why do you think he wrote it?"

"We want the manuscript," Angleton said. "All the carbons and any other papers he might have brought home. Where is his office?"

He must have talked to Anne Goodpasture, Janet thought. She must have told them about the stuff Win had squirreled away.

"Over there."

Janet nodded at the door that led to a side garden beyond which stood the converted garage that served as Win's private study.

"It's locked. No one goes in there. Not even to dust."

"Do you have the key?"

"It's somewhere," she said. "You can have everything."

She didn't want problems. She had bigger things to think about. Angleton did not force his advantage.

"Perhaps when John here comes back tomorrow, you could . . ."

Angleton nodded at his sidekick, John Horton, the chief of the Mexico City station whom Janet knew and rather liked.

"We want the manuscript and any classified material he kept."

Janet could take no more. They could have their damn papers. Angleton bit off some more condolences. She showed him the door. The awful man was gone but not soon enough.

Thirty-five years on, Win Scott's son, Michael Scott, had elusive memories of the day his father died.

"I think it was a Monday, a Monday afternoon." It was indeed Monday, April 26, 1971. Michael was fifteen years old. He was a "mid," meaning a tenth grader, at the Taft School, a comfortably white Anglo-Saxon Protestant institution of red brick and ivy in the stately countryside of western Connecticut. His father, Win, short for Winston, was back in Mexico City. After serving for thirteen years as the first secretary in the U.S. embassy there, Win had retired to run a consulting business, where Michael worked in the summer.

"Everybody at Taft had to have an extracurricular activity, so I worked at the Jigger Shop, a little student-run cafeteria thing, off on the other side of campus," Michael went on. "I made hamburgers and milkshakes. Between three and six P.M. if you weren't doing sports, that's where you'd go. Or after sports, that's where you'd go, to hang out. Somebody came in and said you're wanted in the dean of students office."

Michael set off on the long walk across campus. When he arrived at the dean's office, who should join him but his long-haired stepbrother, George Leddy, also fifteen years old and a "mid."

In middle age George Leddy would have a different file of memories of what all agreed was a miserable day. Michael, a filmmaker, remembered events and images. George, a political activist, remembered feelings and situations. They had enrolled at Taft the previous September. For both, the exclusive boarding school marked a huge change from Greengates School, the unpretentious British day school that they had attended in Mexico City.

"Until I got to Connecticut, I didn't know that rich people lived in wooden houses," George quipped. Dark-haired, observant, and easygoing, Michael had no trouble making friends. He joined the hockey team. George broke an ankle and became the projectionist in the campus film society.

Michael could not remember exactly what the dean said, but it was something like, "'We got a call from Mexico and we have some bad news. Your father died.'"

Michael remembered a moment of denial.

"I remember thinking, I didn't really hear it that way. I didn't quite hear it as he had died. I thought he was probably in the hospital or something, you know. And I guess they clarified it. He was dead. I don't remember asking any questions. I think George and I just kind of listened."

Michael was the only son of a loving man. His mother had died when he was seven years old. His father had remarried and, for that time, remained an attentive dad. Win had given him his first horse, his first camera. He taught him how to golf. He gave him his first job as a messenger boy at Diversified Corporate Services, the consulting business that Win had set up after his retirement. Now that Michael was away at school, Win wrote a letter every few days without fail, full of family news, advice, and encouragement. If Michael did not feel emotional about the news of his father's death, it was because he could not imagine life without him.

George's feelings for his deceased stepfather were more complex. His mother, Janet Graham Leddy Scott, had divorced his father when he was six years old. He rarely saw his real father. For a long time he felt like Win was the ideal stepfather, strong-willed but caring and sensitive. He and his mother occasionally waged loud arguments punctuated by slamming doors, but that was it. Win tutored him patiently in math and taught his sister, Suzanne, how to ride horses. But he missed his real father, who lived back in the States in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

"I had emotional issues around not knowing my dad," George Leddy said. "I remember thinking, 'What would it be like if I lived with my dad?'"

My mom didn't talk him up as an interesting or nice person. If she got mad at me, she liked to say, 'I'm going to send you to live with your father.' My dad at that time was working for the United Nations and the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. She portrayed Carlisle, where he lived, as stifling, and she was probably right. She was critical of middle-class American life. She wanted us to have a more cosmopolitan, international upbringing."

In the dean's office, Win's death did not make much sense.

"We sat there shell-shocked," George said. "I was very anxious. I remember thinking, 'This isn't supposed to happen.'"

Michael only recalled the dean saying, "'OK, you're dismissed now.'"

George's brother John, attending Fairfield University in Connecticut, was supposed to come pick them up and drive them to the airport. "Amazingly, we did not get it together in time," George said. Michael thought they took a wrong turn on the highway to New York. George thought they never left Connecticut. In any case, they missed their flight to Mexico City. They arrived at the house a few hours after Jim Angleton had left.

Gregory Leddy, Michael and George's oldest brother, had been first to hear the news. He was twenty-two years old, fresh out of college, and teaching English in Mexico City. He had gotten the call at work from his aunt. "It's about Scottie," she said. "Is he dead?" Gregory asked, already knowing the answer. Gregory went straight home to the two-story American-style ranch house at Rio Escondido 16, a gated roundabout in the Lomas Chapultepec section of western Mexico City. His mother was in a daze. His stepfather's body lay behind closed doors in his bedroom. Gregory listened to Bink Goodrich, a family friend who served as Win's lawyer, tell the world that Scottie was dead. Goodrich was on the phone with a reporter, saying, "Winston Scott died of a massive heart attack."

Gregory already knew that Win was not the First Political Officer at the embassy, as he sometimes said. He knew that his stepfather actually worked for the CIA, that he was, in fact, "station chief," a very important person in the Mexican scheme of things.

"I thought, 'massive heart attack?' Where did he get massive?" Gregory recalled years later. "He had no way to know. In fact, where did he get that it was a heart attack?"

Gregory's mother, Janet, did not say much. Scottie had keeled over as they talked at the breakfast table, she said. She had gone into the kitchen to check on the eggs when her mother, the *abuelita*, sitting at the table with Win, suddenly shouted. Janet came back into the room to see Win's head slumped forward.

“I knew he was gone,” was all she could say. “As soon as I looked, I knew.”

Michael, George, and John arrived the next day from Connecticut. They had missed Win’s funeral. Mexican law required burial within twenty-four hours of death. Win had been laid to rest that morning among the hedges of the narrow central pedestrian boulevard of the Panteon Americano. Michael barely remembered going to the cemetery that afternoon. George recalled it well. Seeing the grave was no comfort. “I remember how crowded the cemetery was, how close together the gravestones were,” he said. Win’s stone was not complete. George did not like the scene. The smoky steel apparatus of a Pemex oil refinery looming over the north wall of the cemetery somehow discouraged contemplation. George was worried about Michael—would he stay with the family now that his father was dead? Were they going to be able to stay at Taft? He wanted to talk to his mother, but Janet Scott had other things on her mind. Like what was in Win’s study that the CIA wanted so bad?

In his later years, John Horton would swear it had all been Janet Scott’s idea. In April 1971, Horton was relatively new to the station chief job. He said that Win Scott’s widow had voluntarily given the agency everything that her late husband possessed in the way of agency records, that Jim Angleton did not have to pry anything out of her hands. In Horton’s account, freely shared with colleagues in later years, it was Win’s wife who had called him. She told him that Win had died. He came immediately to express regrets and help her in any way possible. “Janet had one urgent request,” Horton wrote in a cable to headquarters, “and that was that I retrieve the files in Win’s study.” He admitted that some might say the agency had “pulled a fast one” in taking away Win’s personal papers. He feared people might conclude that Angleton sought to hide “some vile knowledge on the part of the agency,” perhaps “damning evidence” about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy eight years earlier.

It wasn’t so, Horton insisted.

After Angleton’s departure, Horton returned the next day to the Scott home on Rio Escondido and spent several hours behind the locked door of Win’s study. Janet shooed away various people who had come calling. Her children came and went with no inkling that there was a visitor in the study, much less one from the CIA. Horton was “amazed” at what he found though he didn’t specify why. The haul included a plethora of secret files, including tapes and photos of accused presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald visiting communist embassies, and the unpublished memoir of a CIA man

whose career spanned the era from the Blitz of London to the Tet Offensive. When no one was looking, Horton lugged three large cartons and four suitcases to an unmarked truck parked at the curb. The contents of Win's home office were shipped by plane back to CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

The agency had taken possession of Win Scott's personal correspondence, including letters about his children's schooling; travel itineraries; medical claims; credit union correspondence; financial records; appointment books for the years 1967, 1968, and 1969; assorted pages from his appointment books for the years 1957, 1961, and 1963; and at least one short story, entitled "A Time to Kill." There were extraordinarily sensitive tape recordings. From Win's safe, Horton obtained a stack of eight-square-inch reel-to-reel tape boxes. One tape was marked "Black Panthers." Another was labeled "Lesbians." The biggest batch, a stack of tapes three or four inches thick, was marked "Oswald."

The treasure in the trove was a 221-page manuscript entitled "It Came to Little." The story that Win Scott told in those pages displeased and disturbed his longtime friends in CIA headquarters, including Angleton and the director of Central Intelligence himself, Richard Helms. Helms and Angleton were the two most powerful men in the American clandestine service. Both had known Win for more than twenty-five years. By snatching up the only two copies of the manuscript, Horton thought the agency had dodged a proverbial bullet.

"Think worst has been avoided through Angleton's persuasiveness and Mrs. Scott's good cheer," he cabled Washington that day.

When Michael and George and the other children returned from down the street, Janet said nothing about the visit of the CIA man. They did not need to know. A week later, Janet told family and friends, she found a handwritten note from Win to Helms in the unlikely location of her late husband's sock drawer. The note read, "Dear Dick I will completely follow your wishes about publication." Janet was relieved and gave the note to John Horton to show that Win was not intending to do anything behind the agency's back.

George was worried about Michael, and he could not figure out how to talk to his mother. He was worried his stepbrother would be cast adrift.

Janet was too devastated to talk to her son.

"She wasn't as reachable or accessible as I hoped," George recalled. "I had my emotional needs, a lot of confusion, a lot of guilt."

Janet was focused on Michael. The weekend after his father's death, she summoned her sixteen-year-old stepson to her bedroom. Her brother Alec

Graham, who lived in Mexico City was there. He was now Michael's legal guardian. Janet had to break some difficult news to Michael that Win had always avoided.

"You need to be aware of something," Janet said. "Your father never told you, but you should know that you were adopted."

Uncle Alec took up the story.

"Your father had another son from a previous marriage, and there's some concern that he may claim part of the estate, and if he does so, we want you to know that he exists out there," he said.

Michael was stoic. He had seen a picture of a boy up on a shelf in Win's office. He had heard mention of someone named Beau. He wasn't surprised. Adoption seemed to be the bigger deal to his stepmother and uncle. They seemed to be worried that he would be disturbed by the news that he was adopted. Michael was not fazed.

"I played it completely like 'Yeah, so?'"

Michael laughed at his teenage bravado, but it was true. He was the son of an intelligence officer, after all. He had figured out the secret of his adoption years before Janet's disclosure.

"I had had hunches about being adopted," he said. "There was always talk among the Leddy kids about them knowing something about me that I didn't know. I didn't really care. I think everybody else made it a much bigger issue than I did. I was already in boarding school, I was entrenched on my path."

Michael went on to attend Occidental College in Los Angeles, majoring in film with a minor in Latin American studies. He realized "the outfit" his father had worked for was the CIA. He learned about how the agency had overthrown the government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954. He heard his stepmother tell the story of Jim Angleton's strange visit and the disappearance of Win's unpublished life story.

What Michael did not know about his father, he would eventually learn, would fill a book. He did not know that his father had been present at the creation of the CIA, served as the first chief of station in London, and became one of the agency's top officers worldwide; that he had been friendly with Kim Philby, the genial British diplomat and closet communist who was among the most audacious and effective spies in the annals of espionage; that his father had overseen the surveillance of accused presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald just weeks before the assassination of President Kennedy; that he had recruited a generation of Mexican politicians, including three presidents, as his paid agents; and that he had received one of the agency's highest honors upon retirement. His father, he came to understand,

embodied as well as anyone the rise of America's Central Intelligence Agency as a force in the world.

Michael did not know much of this because Jim Angleton had purloined the only copies of his father's life story as Win himself wanted to present it. As Michael's quest to recover his father's story deepened and expanded, he began in effect to write the book that his father never published. Michael was fascinated by his father's story, and he knew that he did not know the half of it.