

# RED OR DEAD

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In memory of Gordon Burn,  
with love and thanks.

Here I am.  
I stand at the door and knock.  
If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,  
I will come in and eat with him,  
and he with me.

*Revelation*, Chapter 3, Verse 20

### The Argument III

Repetition. Repetition. Repetition. After the harvest, the failed harvest.  
Before the harvest, the next harvest. The man knocked on the door.

Come, said a voice from behind the door.

The man opened the door. The man stepped into the room. The man stood in the room. Before the long table, the long shadows.

Sit, said a voice from the shadows.

The man sat down in a chair at the end of the long table.

Yes, asked the voice.

The man blinked. The man tried to keep the tears from his eyes.  
The man swallowed. The man tried to keep his voice from breaking.  
And the man said, You are right. The strain has proved much too much.  
I am tired. And I cannot go on. I have had enough.

Close the door on your way out.

The man tried to stand. The man tried to get back on his feet.  
But the man could not stand. The man could not get back on his feet.



# RED OR DEAD

William Shankly, in two halves



THE FIRST HALF  
EVERYDAY IS SATURDAY

*Shankly Among the Scousers*



## 1. TO SEE OURSELVES AS OTHERS SEE US

In the winter-time, in the night-time, they remembered him. And then they came to him. In the winter-time, in the night-time. Not cap in hand, not on bended knee. Not this sort. But still they came. Here to Leeds Road, Huddersfield. Here on October 17, 1959. They came –

In the winter-time, in the night-time.

Tom Williams had seen enough. Liverpool Football Club were in the Second Division. They had not won anything since the League title in 1947. And they had never won the FA Cup. Tom Williams telephoned Geoff Twentyman. Geoff Twentyman told Tom Williams the name of the man Liverpool Football Club needed. Tom Williams telephoned Matt Busby. Matt Busby told Tom Williams the name of the man Liverpool Football Club needed. Tom Williams telephoned Walter Winterbottom. Walter Winterbottom told Tom Williams the name of the man Liverpool Football Club needed. Tom Williams had heard enough. Tom Williams telephoned Harry Latham –

In the winter-time, in the night-time.

Tom Williams and Harry Latham drove across the Pennines to Leeds Road, Huddersfield. They did not tell the directors of Huddersfield Town they were coming. They did not ask the directors of Huddersfield Town for complimentary tickets. They did not sit with the directors of Huddersfield Town. At Leeds Road, Huddersfield, Tom Williams and Harry Latham sat as close to the pitch and the home dug-out as they could. Huddersfield Town were playing Cardiff City. But Tom Williams and Harry Latham did not watch Huddersfield Town. They did not watch Cardiff City. They watched the man in the dug-out. The home dug-out. His eyes narrow, his mouth open. Jaw out, neck forward. His arms moving, his fists clenched. Right foot, left foot. Tom Williams and Harry Latham watched this man make every run every player on the pitch made. They watched this man kick every ball every player on the pitch kicked. They watched this man take every free kick. Every corner. And every throw-in. They watched this man make every pass. And every tackle. And Tom Williams and Harry Latham listened to the man in the dug-out. They listened to this man cajoling his players. They listened to this man encouraging his players. And Tom Williams and Harry Latham saw the way the players of

Huddersfield Town listened to the man. The way they listened to this man and the way they obeyed this man. His every command and his every instruction. His every word, the voice of God. And after the whistle, the final whistle, Tom Williams and Harry Latham had seen enough and they had heard enough. They knew this man had fought harder and played harder than any man out there on the pitch. And Tom Williams and Harry Latham knew this was the man they needed for Liverpool Football Club. This was the man they wanted for Liverpool Football Club. The only man for Liverpool Football Club –

In the winter-time, in the night-time. The only man.

In the shadows of the hills, in the shadows of the mills. Under the stands and on the slope. Tom Williams and Harry Latham saw the man they needed, the man they wanted. Under the stands, on the slope. Tom Williams and Harry Latham walked towards the man. And Tom Williams said, Good evening, sir. I don't know if you remember me, but my name is Tom Williams and I am the chairman of Liverpool Football Club and this is Harry Latham, one of our directors. I wonder if we might have a word with you, Mr Shankly?

I remember you, said Bill Shankly. And they are not for sale.

Tom Williams smiled. Tom Williams shook his head. And Tom Williams said, We're not here for Law or Wilson. We are here to talk to you, Mr Shankly. We are here to ask you a question.

Then ask it, said Bill Shankly.

Tom Williams said, How would you like to manage the best football club in the country, Mr Shankly?

Why, asked Bill Shankly. Matt Busby packing it in, is he?

Tom Williams smiled again. And Tom Williams said, Very funny, Mr Shankly. But you know what I'm talking about. I'm talking about Liverpool Football Club. How would you like to manage Liverpool Football Club, Mr Shankly?

I thought you didn't want me for your football club, said Bill Shankly. I thought you didn't think I was good enough for Liverpool?

Tom Williams shook his head again. And Tom Williams said, I never said that, Mr Shankly. I never said that.

You didn't need to.

I wasn't the chairman then, Mr Shankly. But I am the chairman now. And so now I'm asking you if you would like to

manage Liverpool Football Club, Mr Shankly?

I thought you already had a manager? Mr Taylor? Phil Taylor?

It has not been made public yet. Nothing has been announced yet. But Mr Taylor is not a well man. He has asked me to relieve him of his duties. As I say, nothing has been announced yet, nothing made public yet. But we'd like to sort out something before it is.

Under the stands, on the slope. There was the sound of joking, laughter from the Huddersfield Town dressing room.

We might've lost today, said Bill Shankly. But we're not doing too badly here, you know, Mr Williams?

Tom Williams said, We know that. We can see that. And that's why we want you, Mr Shankly.

Well, said Bill Shankly. I'll not be rushed. But I will consider it.

In the winter-time, in the night-time. Tom Williams held out his hand. And Tom Williams said, Thank you, Mr Shankly. That is all I ask. Goodnight, Mr Shankly. Goodnight.

## 2. IN NIGHTS OF POSSIBILITY, IN DAYS OF OPPORTUNITY

In their house in Huddersfield. In their kitchen at the table. Bill ate and Bill talked. Firing out his words, wolfing down his tea. Bill ate and Bill talked. But Ness said nothing, Ness ate nothing. Ness put down her knife and her fork on her plate. And Ness got up from the table.

Bill frowned. And Bill said, You've not finished your tea, love.

Ness picked up the plate and walked over to the bin. Ness pushed the meat and the vegetables off the plate and into the bin.

Bill shook his head. And Bill said, What a waste.

Ness walked over to the sink. Ness put the plug in the sink. Ness turned on the taps. Ness put her plate, her knife and her fork on top of the pans in the sink. Ness squeezed washing-up liquid into the sink. Ness turned off the taps. Ness picked up the scrubbing brush. Ness began to wash the plate and the pans. The knife and the fork.

Where is Liverpool, Daddy, asked one of their daughters.

Bill smiled. And Bill said, It's by the seaside, love.

Ness stopped washing the plate and the pans. The knife and the fork. Ness looked up from the sink. Ness stared out into the dark

garden. And Ness said, We're settled here. We've got a nice house. We've got good friends. The girls like their schools. They're happy here. I'm happy here. I don't want to leave, love.

Bill said, I know, love. I know.

...

In his car, at the wheel. Driving down this road, driving up that road. Bill saw a telephone box on a corner up ahead. And Bill braked. Suddenly. Bill pulled over. Bill got out of his car. And Bill went into the phone box. Bill took out a piece of paper from the pocket of his coat. Bill dialled the telephone number on the piece of paper. Bill listened to the phone ring. Bill heard a voice answer. Bill dropped two coins into the phone. And Bill said, Mr Williams? This is Bill Shankly.

Good evening, Mr Shankly. What can I do for you?

Bill said, I've been thinking about your offer.

I'm very glad to hear that, said Tom Williams. So what have you been thinking, Mr Shankly?

Bill said, I'm interested. But I have a number of conditions.

Go on, Mr Shankly.

Well, I have to have total control of the playing and the coaching staff. I have to decide on the training methods and the playing style. I have to select the team without any interference from you or the directors. And if I feel we need new players, then you and the directors must make the money available for me to buy the players I want. And I also want a salary of £2,500. And so if you cannot accommodate all these conditions, then I'm afraid I'm not interested.

May I ask what Huddersfield are paying you, Mr Shankly?

Bill said, £2,000 a year.

Then I think we can accommodate all your conditions, said Tom Williams. I am sure we can, Mr Shankly.

Bill said, Then I accept your offer.

Thank you, said Tom Williams. Then we'll be in touch again. Goodnight, Mr Shankly. Goodnight.

...

In their house in Huddersfield, their home in Huddersfield. In the night and in the silence. In his chair. Bill put down the newspaper. And in the night and in the silence. Bill closed his eyes. Liverpool Football Club had come to Leeds Road, Huddersfield. In the twentieth

minute, Les Massie had scored. And Huddersfield Town had won. Liverpool Football Club had lost. Huddersfield Town were sixth in the Second Division. Liverpool Football Club were tenth in the Second Division. But no one was happy. Ten days before, Phil Taylor had announced his resignation as manager of Liverpool Football Club. Bill remembered his words. The words Bill had read in the newspaper. Bill could not forget his words. Phil Taylor had said, In my opinion, the club has enjoyed reasonable success. My three years have resulted in a third and two fourth-place positions. However, the strain of it all has proved too much for me. And so, great as my love is for Liverpool Football Club, I have decided to resign. I made promotion my goal. I set my heart on it. I strove for it with all my energy. But such striving was not enough. Now the time has come to hand over to someone else.

In the night and in the silence. In his chair. Bill opened his eyes again. The grapevine was alive with rumours. Rumours that Liverpool Football Club wanted Bill Shankly to be their new manager. Rumours Liverpool Football Club had denied. In his chair. Bill picked up the newspaper again. Mr Lawson Martindale, one of the senior directors of Liverpool Football Club, had said, Any names mentioned in connection with the vacancy are only conjecture. There is no certainty about the matter. Nor can there be until we have examined all the applications. We particularly desire secrecy. And we are hopeful that we shall have many first-class men seeking the job. But we do not wish to cause them, or their clubs, any embarrassment.

...

In the ground at Leeds Road, before the door to the Huddersfield Town boardroom. Bill touched his tie, Bill straightened his tie. And then Bill knocked on the door to the boardroom.

Come, said a voice from behind the door.

Bill opened the door. Slowly. Bill stepped into the boardroom.

Sit, said Stephen Lister, the chairman of Huddersfield Town.

Bill walked to a chair at the end of a long table. Bill sat down in the chair. Bill looked up the long table at Stephen Lister and the directors of Huddersfield Town Football Club. Bill coughed. And then Bill said, This will be my last weekly report. I have received an offer from Liverpool Football Club. And I have decided to accept their offer.

Stephen Lister and the other directors did not speak.

Bill coughed again. And then Bill said, I realise that this may come as something of a shock to you all. But I have decided to go because I would like to take up the challenge of managing a big club in a big city. And Liverpool Football Club is a big club in a big city.

The chairman and the directors still said nothing.

Bill coughed. And then Bill said, But I want you to know I have taken this decision very reluctantly. I have enjoyed my time in Huddersfield. And the club has always been very good to me.

Stephen Lister and the directors looked at each other. They patted their bellies, they stroked their chins. They began to mutter, they began to whisper. This name and that name.

I wonder if Harry Catterick would be interested in coming here, said Hayden Battye. A decent chap, I hear . . .

Bill laughed. Bill shook his head. And Bill said, Harry Catterick? But Wednesday are a much bigger club than this.

I think the very least you could do, said Stephen Lister, is to give us one month's notice, Shankly. You will continue in your duties until the end of the month, until the end of December.

Bill said, Fine. If that is what you want.

Close the door on your way out.

...

In the corridor, outside his office at Leeds Road. Bill saw Eddie Brennan, the assistant club secretary of Huddersfield Town. And Bill said, I've got something to tell you, Eddie. Something to tell you. I'm leaving, Eddie. I've been offered the Liverpool job and I've accepted it. So I'm leaving, Eddie. I'm off, I'm off. And I can't wait, Eddie. I can't wait. A big club, Eddie. A massive club. So much potential, Eddie. So much potential. You've been there, Eddie. You know. That crowd, Eddie. That city. What a crowd, Eddie! What a city! And they're going to back me, Eddie. The board. They're going to back me all the way, Eddie. Give me all the money I need. Not like here, Eddie. Not like this place. Never be anything, Eddie. This place. No potential, Eddie. No ambition. No money, Eddie. Nothing. Same with Carlisle, same with Grimsby. Same with Workington, same as here. Not like Liverpool, Eddie. What a club! What a city, Eddie! All that potential, all that ambition. I tell you, Eddie. I've been waiting my

whole life for this. My whole life, Eddie. For a chance like this. It's the chance of a lifetime, Eddie. The bloody chance of a lifetime. And I can't wait, Eddie. I just can't wait. So what do you think, Eddie?

We'll miss you, said Eddie Brennan. I know that, Bill.

Bill said, And I'll miss you, Eddie. I will. But you've got to go where the work is, Eddie. Where you are wanted. Where you will be appreciated, Eddie. Appreciated and supported.

I supported you, said Eddie Brennan. And I appreciated you.

Bill nodded. And Bill said, I know that, Eddie. I know that. And I appreciated you, Eddie. I did. And I do, Eddie. I really do.

And I believed you, too, said Eddie Brennan.

...

In the boardroom at Leeds Road, at the long table. Bill and Stephen Lister sat down before the local press –

Isn't it true you've simply had a bellyful, asked the reporter from the *Huddersfield Examiner*. A bellyful of walking a financial tightrope, Bill? Of trying for promotion while balancing the books? Isn't that the reason you're off to Liverpool, Bill? Because you've had a bellyful of Huddersfield Town?

Bill shook his head. And Bill said, No. It's going to be a wrench to say goodbye. My wife and family have made more friends in Huddersfield than in any other town we've ever lived in before.

It was certainly a bolt from the blue, said Stephen Lister. It was the very last thing we were expecting. But Mr Shankly put his position before the board and, after expressing our regret at the prospect of losing his services, we have agreed that Mr Shankly shall join Liverpool Football Club. Mr Shankly has no contract with Huddersfield Town, but he considers it only fair to the club that he should stay at Leeds Road for a month in order to give us the opportunity of making a new appointment before he leaves us. Liverpool are getting a good man. Thank you.

...

In the boardroom at Leeds Road, before the chairman. Bill touched his tie. And Bill said, You wanted to see me, Mr Lister?

There is no point you hanging around here like a spare part, said Stephen Lister. Not now everyone knows you're going. If you wish to go to Liverpool now, then you can go. We'll not stand in your

way, Shankly. We'll not hold you to your month's notice.

Bill held out his hand. And Bill said, Thank you, Mr Lister.

Close the door on your way out, Shankly.

...

In another boardroom, at another long table. Bill and Tom Williams sat down before the local press. And Horace Yates, from the *Liverpool Daily Post*, and Leslie Edwards, from the *Liverpool Echo*, opened their notebooks, took out their pens and waited –

Gentlemen, said Tom Williams. The board of Liverpool Football Club would like to announce that all applications for the position of manager have been considered. Of the small number who came up to the requirements, the board decided to ascertain the services of Mr William Shankly, of Huddersfield Town FC, and have offered the management to him.

Bill nodded. Bill smiled. And then Bill said, I am very pleased and proud to have been chosen as manager of Liverpool Football Club. Liverpool is a club of great potential. I have known Mr Williams a long time and I have always considered him to be one of football's gentlemen. He has been at Liverpool Football Club since the club began. He is devoted to Liverpool Football Club. And I am confident that we will be able to work well together. It is my opinion that Liverpool have a crowd of followers which ranks with the greatest in the game. They deserve success and I hope in my small way to be able to do something towards helping them achieve it. But I make no promises except that, from the moment I take over, I shall put everything I have into the job I so willingly undertake. This appointment is a challenge for me. I rank it similar to that confronting Joe Mercer when he left Sheffield United for Aston Villa. Or when Alan Brown left Burnley to go to Sunderland. These clubs, like Liverpool, are amongst the top-grade teams in the football land. So when the challenge was made to me, I simply could not refuse to accept it. There is a job to be done. Perhaps a big job. But with the cooperation of Mr Williams, the directors and staff, I feel certain we shall see the task through together. I am not a lazy man. I like to get down to it and set the example which I want following from the top of the club to the bottom. I make few promises. But one of them is that, in everything I do, I hope there will be patent common sense attached



to it. Common sense and hard work. Together, hard work and common sense bring success. That is what I believe. In football and in life.

How would Mr Shankly reflect on his time as manager of Huddersfield Town, asked Horace Yates, from the *Liverpool Daily Post*. Would he say he had been a success at Huddersfield?

Bill nodded again. And Bill said, Yes, I would. When I took over at Huddersfield three years ago, I had only a team of boys to go to work on. Indeed, they are still boys, most of them. I would not be human if I were not pleased with the way in which players like Law, McHale, Massie and Wilson have advanced under my direction. I guided them from their junior beginnings to League football. My signings have been Ray Wood of Manchester United, who I consider to be the best goalkeeper in the Second Division, and Derek Hawke. I don't think either of them have let me down. I believe I am leaving Huddersfield Town in a better, stronger position than when I took over three years ago and so I consider that to be a success. That I have been a success at Huddersfield. And I hope they would agree.

But the burning ambition of every Liverpool supporter, said Leslie Edwards, from the *Liverpool Echo*, is to see this football club restored to the First Division. How do you feel about that?

Bill nodded. And Bill said, Nobody realises more than I do what a tough job that is likely to be. But I have gained a lot of experience of Second Division football and so I know the difficulties. But I think we can do it. In fact, I know we can do it.

...

In their house in Huddersfield, in the bedroom. Bill waited for the dawn, Bill waited for the light. And Bill got out of bed. Bill shaved, Bill washed. Bill put on his suit, Bill put on his tie. And Bill went downstairs. Bill ate breakfast with Ness and their daughters. Bill kissed them goodbye. Bill went out of the house, Bill got into his car. And Bill drove across the Pennines. Past Manchester –

Into Liverpool. To Anfield.

In the ground, in the office. Bill shook hands with Jimmy McInnes, the club secretary. Bill knew Jimmy McInnes. Bill knew Jimmy came from Ayr. Bill knew Jimmy had played for Third Lanark and for Liverpool Football Club. Jimmy introduced Bill to the receptionist, the ticket administrators, the cleaners and the groundsman,

Arthur Riley. Bill knew Arthur Riley. Bill knew Arthur had worked for Liverpool Football Club for over thirty years. Arthur took Bill to meet the coaching staff. Under the stands, down a corridor. Among the boots, the dirty boots –

This is Bob Paisley, said Arthur Riley. Bob is the first-team trainer. This is Joe Fagan. Joe is in charge of the reserves. This is Reuben Bennett. Reuben takes most of the training. And this is Albert Shelley. Albert used to be the first-team trainer. He's supposed to be retired. But Albert still comes in every day. Albert does whatever needs doing. Albert does everything and anything.

Bill nodded. And Bill said, I know Bob. Me and Bob played against each other on many occasions. We had many a good scrap. And I know Joe. I tried to sign Joe when I was at Grimsby and he was at Manchester City. I know Reuben. Reuben used to work with my brother Bob at Dundee. And I know Albert. I know he lives and breathes Liverpool Football Club. I know you all do. And so I know you men are all good men. True football men. But I also know you fellows have all been here a long time. And so I know you'll all be worried about me coming in. A new feller with new ways. Different ways. Maybe wanting to bring in new trainers with him. His mates. Well, I'm not going to do that. But I do have my ways. My methods and my systems. And they will be different ways. But I am here to work with you. Not against you. I am here to work in cooperation with you. As a team. And so gradually I will lay down my plans and then gradually we will be on the same wavelength. And, in return, I ask for only one thing. Loyalty. I want loyalty. So I don't want anybody to carry stories about anyone else. The man who brings the story to me will be the man who gets the sack. I don't care if he's been here fifty years. He'll be the one who goes. Because I want everyone to be loyal to each other. To the team. And to the club. So everything we do will be for Liverpool Football Club. Not for ourselves. Not as individuals. But for the team. For Liverpool Football Club. Total loyalty. That is all I ask. Because that loyalty makes strength. And that strength will bring success. I promise you.

...

In their house in Huddersfield, in their kitchen. Bill and Ness cleared the table. Bill and Ness washed the pots. And then Ness made

a cup of tea for her and Bill. Bill and Ness took their cups of tea into the other room. Bill and Ness sat down with their cups of tea. In front of the television. And Bill said, So how was your day then, love?

Mine was fine, said Ness. But how was yours?

Bill nodded. And Bill said, It went well, love. It went well. Thank you, love. They are all good men.

That's good then, said Ness.

Bill said, Aye.

But it's a long drive, said Ness. You must be tired, love.

Bill nodded again. And Bill said, It is, love. And I am a bit tired. But it's a good city, love. More like a Scottish city. Good people, love. Like Scottish people. I can tell, love. Like Glasgow. So I think you'd like it, love. And the girls would, too.

Yes then, said Ness. I'd like to go over, love. To have a look then. And maybe even look at some houses, love. If you have time?

Bill smiled. And Bill said, Aye. On Sunday then.

...

In Liverpool, at Anfield. Bill walked around the ground with Arthur Riley. Bill looked at the turnstiles and Bill looked at the stands. Bill looked at the seats and Bill looked at the toilets. Bill looked at the dressing rooms and Bill looked at the tunnel. And then Bill walked out onto the pitch. The Anfield pitch. Bill stood on the pitch, Bill stamped on the pitch. Once, twice. Bill shook his head. Once, twice. And Bill said, How do you water this pitch, Arthur? Where do you keep your watering equipment?

There isn't any, said Arthur Riley. There's no water.

Bill said, No water? So what do you do?

There's a tap in the visitors' dressing room, said Arthur Riley. We run a pipe from there out here.

Bill looked down at the pitch. The Anfield pitch, the Anfield grass. Frozen and bare, hard and barren. Bill shook his head again. And Bill said, You run a pipe? That's no bloody good, is it?

I know, said Arthur Riley. But what can we do?

Bill said, We can fix it. We can buy some bloody equipment. That's what we can do, Arthur.

I've been saying that for years, said Arthur Riley. But there's no money. No money here.

Bill smiled. And Bill said, Leave that to me. I'll get you the money, Arthur. Trust me.

I do, said Arthur Riley. You're the Boss.

Bill smiled again. And Bill said, I am. Now let's you and me go and have a look at the training ground. Let's go out to Melwood.

You're not going to like it, said Arthur Riley. You're not going to be happy, Boss. I can tell you that for nothing.

Bill shrugged. And Bill said, How bad can it be, Arthur? It can't be any worse than this place, can it?

...

In Liverpool, in the car. Bill and Ness drove from house to house. This house for sale and that house for sale. This house too big, that house too small. Outside the last house, back in the car. Bill shook his head. And Bill said, I'm sorry, love. That was a waste of time.

No it wasn't, said Ness. There's no rush, love. Better to find the right house than any old house. Better to take our time, better to wait, love. And at least we can have Christmas in Huddersfield.

Bill nodded. And Bill said, Yes. With our friends.

On their way back home, home to Huddersfield. Bill stopped the car at Melwood in West Derby. Bill and Ness got out of the car. It was cold and it was dark. There were trees and there were bushes. There were hills and there were hollows. There was an air-raid shelter and there was a cricket pitch. There was an old wooden pavilion. In the cold and in the dark. Bill and Ness stood in the middle of the training pitch. They felt the long grass and the uneven ground beneath their feet. Bill shook his head again. And Bill said, What do you think, love? Have I made a mistake in coming here? A big mistake, love?

No, you haven't, said Ness. You want to get into the First Division. You want to win the League. You want to win the Cup. So this is your chance. The chance you have been waiting for. The chance you have been working for. Your whole life. You are not a coward. And you are not a shirker. So you will do it, love. I know you will.