



## Coward of the County

Everyone considered him the coward of the county  
He'd never stood one single time to prove the county wrong  
His mama named him Tommy, but folks just called him yellow  
Something always told me they were reading Tommy wrong  
He was only ten years old when his daddy died in prison  
I looked after Tommy, 'cause he was my brother's son  
I still recall the final words my brother said to Tommy  
"Son, my life is over, but yours has just begun"

Promise me, son, not to do the things I've done  
Walk away from trouble if you can  
Now, it won't mean you're weak if you turn the other cheek  
I hope you're old enough to understand  
Son, you don't have to fight to be a man

There's someone for everyone and Tommy's love was Becky  
In her arms he didn't have to prove he was a man  
One day while he was working, the Gatlin boys came calling  
They took turns at Becky and there was three of them  
Tommy opened up the door and saw his Becky crying  
The torn dress, the shattered look was more than he could stand  
He reached above the fireplace and took down his daddy's picture  
As the tears fell on his daddy's face, he heard these words again

Promise me, son, not to do the things I've done  
Walk away from trouble if you can  
Now, it won't mean you're weak if you turn the other cheek  
I hope you're old enough to understand  
Son, you don't have to fight to be a man

The Gatlin boys just laughed at him when he

walked into the barroom  
One of them got up and met him halfway cross the floor  
When Tommy turned around, they said, "Hey, look! Old yellow's leaving"  
But you could've heard a pin drop when Tommy stopped and locked the door  
Twenty years of crawling was bottled up inside him  
He wasn't holding nothin' back; he let 'em have it all  
When Tommy left the barroom, not a Gatlin boy was standing  
He said, "This one's for Becky," as he watched the last one fall  
And I heard him say

I promised you, Dad, not to do the things you've done  
I'll walk away from trouble when I can  
Now, please don't think I'm weak, I didn't turn the other cheek  
And Papa, I should hope you understand  
Sometimes you gotta fight when you're a man

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