

[Verse]

D G D
Ev'ryone considered him the coward of the county.

A
He'd never stood one single time to prove the county wrong.

D G D
His mama named him Tommy, the folks just called him yellow,

A D
but something always told me they were reading Tommy wrong.

D G D
He was only ten years old when his daddy died in prison.

A
I looked after Tommy 'cause he was my brother's son.

D G D
I still recall the final words my brother said to Tommy:

A D
"Son, my life is over, but yours is just begun."

[Chorus]

D G D
Promise me, son, not to do the things I've done.

G D A
Walk away from trouble if you can.

D G D
It won't mean you're weak if you turn the other cheek.

G A
I hope you're old enough to understand:

A7 D
Son, you don't have to fight to be a man."

[Verse]

D G D
There's someone for ev'ryone and Tommy's love was Becky.

A
In her arms he didn't have to prove he was a man.

D G D
One day while he was workin' the Gatlin boys came callin'.

A (Spoken) D
They took turns at Becky.... There was three of them!

D G D
Tommy opened up the door and saw his Becky cryin'.

A
The torn dress, the shattered look was more than he could stand.

D G D
He reached above the fireplace and took down his daddy's picture.

A D
As his tears fell on his daddy's face, he heard these words again:

[Chorus]

D G D
"Promise me, son, not to do the things I've done.
G D A
Walk away from trouble if you can.
D G D
It won't mean you're weak if you turn the other cheek.
G A
I hope you're old enough to understand:
A7 D
Son, you don't have to fight to be a man."

[Verse]

E A E
The Gatlin boys just laughed at him when he walked into the barroom.
B7
One of them got up and met him halfway 'cross the floor.
E A E
When Tommy turned around they said, "Hey look! ol' yellow's leavin'."
(Spoken) B E
But you coulda heard a pin drop when Tommy stopped and blocked the door.

E A E
Twenty years of crawlin' was bottled up inside him.
B7
He wasn't holdin' nothin' back; he let 'em have it all.
E A E
When Tommy left the barroom not a Gatlin boy was standin'.
B7 E
He said, "This one's for Becky," as he watched the last one fall.
(Spoken)
And I heard him say,

[Chorus]
E A E
"I promised you, Dad, not to do the things you done.
A E B7

I walk away from trouble when I can.

E A E
Now please don't think I'm weak, I didn't turn the other cheek,
A B
and Papa, I sure hope you understand:
B7 E
Sometimes you gotta fight when you're a man."

E A E
Ev'ryone considered him the coward of the county.