

[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.