

Kenny Rogers, 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, the folks just called him yellow,
But 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 is just begun.

Promise me, son, not to do the things I've done.
Walk away from trouble if you can.
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.... 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 his 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.
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 across the floor.
When Tommy turned around they said, hey look! ol' yellows leavin'.
But you couldn't hear a pin drop when Tommy stopped and blocked the door.

Twenty years of crawling was bottled up inside him.
He wasn't holding nothing 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 done.
I 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 sure hope you understand:
Sometimes you gotta fight when you're a man.

Everyone considered him the coward of the county.