

Vance

Roger Miller

He was born one mornin'
It was cold and it was snowin'
And from the start he never had a chance
And though the doctors said he couldn't live
His mama had some faith to give
And they brought him to her and his mama named him Vance

He was sick a long time then
I used to sit by him
I'd rub his head and he would squeeze my hand
But he never cried, he'd grit his teeth and smile at me
'Cause he couldn't speak
And that's when I began to respect the little man
And I think Vance was three right about then

He started school and one day
He came home and at the doorway I could tell
The little man didn't want to come inside
He had met a girl but her boyfriend Smitty
Had caught him walkin' home with her
And nearly killed Vance
But then Vance never cried
And the only thing that Smitty hurt was pride

And he said

"Papa do you become a man when you're twenty-one?"
And I said "Age doesn't make a man a man, my son"

He looked at me so puzzled with eyes so young and kind
'n' I think Vance was seven about that time

I guess they say that first love is the very best
At least it was with Vance
'Cause he'd scratched "Becky" on his desk
But Becky went with Smitty and Vance was very small
And he used to dream what it'd be like to be tall
And then a few years later Vance came in one day
And told me and his mama that he had to go away
To be fitted for a uniform
And though his mama shed a tear
He kissed her and said he'd see us in two years
And he looked at me and said "Papa, I'm gonna be a man"

Well, two years to the day
Vance came walkin' in the driveway and
I didn't recognize him from his size till he got near
He came in and he hugged his mama
And said "Hey, Papa, little man, want to go with me somewhere 'n' grab a beer?"

So we're sittin' at this table when
This fella at the bar started buggin' Vance
Callin' him "Soldier"
But Vance kept his cool
And he said "Papa, that guy is Smitty and he's to be pitied now
'Cause that's the same guy that used to bully me in school."

Then Smitty said the wrong thing
When he brought up Becky's name 'n'
Vance finally stood and said "Boy, what did you say?"
And it did my heart so much good when Vance hit ole Smitty
And it took two of Smitty's friends to carry him away

Well, Vance left the very next mornin' 'n'
It was cold and it was snowin'
And from the first, life hadn't been much fun
But he had finally made a stand 'n'
He'd become a self-made man and
Incidentally, he had just turned twenty-one