

# 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