

## Ballade of the Back Road · *Ron Block*

My father's in business, takes it a day at a time,  
just keeping ahead of the wolves, he says, and goes  
from Gothenburg, looking for a way to find  
a deal on irrigation pipes. He knows  
the man will give him credit, and he also knows  
the farmer he'll deliver it to won't think  
it too forward to ask for a check. "That's how it goes,"  
my father says. "No problem. Everything touches everything

if you take it by steps. If I get to the bank on time,"  
he says, "I'll be able to cover the checks I wrote  
to sell this pipe, buy lunch, drive back, not counting the dime  
I'll use to call this man who maybe owes  
me some. Tomorrow I'll pay off what I owe  
this other guy, but maybe I'll sell something  
before then, or maybe I'll take out another note,"  
he says. "No problem. Everything touches everything.

Now if you'll just help me load this load there's time  
for maybe another delivery for the cash flow  
to start tomorrow with." He drives me out to find  
this farmer's farm, and soon we're lost, driving along rows  
and rows of corn, and my father says, "I suppose  
it wouldn't hurt to get to this first thing in the morning.  
Let's start driving back before the gas stations close."  
He says, "No problem. Everything touches everything.

If you leave out the middle you'll never come close  
to what you're trying to get at, which in this case is gasoline.  
Seems I can't remember where this road goes,"  
he says. "No problem. Everything touches everything."