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Ballade of the Back Road

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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,”

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,”