

11 Runes (for Alf, turning 11)

1.

I'm not sure what's not
or what's understood:

I'll give what I've got
to see you to manhood.

2.

The sun's on the water.
It's the middle of winter.

I never had a daughter.
Or thoughts of one, either.

3.

This is the way it is:
you're ten, I'm sixty-one.

These (as they say) are the facts:
we're father and son.

4.

An old friend e-mails:
says she sometimes shakes her head,

counts the miles; says she smiles,
surprised, pleased I'm not dead.

5.

Nikki's right: I'm not dead,
I'm not allowed to die,

not till I'm seventy-seven, she said.
And no lie.

6.

Meantime, it's solstice,
middle of winter;

'sol in stasis',
sun low on the water.

7.

Alive, Alf, to live
clear of any city;

live more than five
gunshots from humanity.

8.

Seems for the first time I'm
close enough up to tune

old words to a rhyme
to tell you the eighth rune.

9.

Three more, too, let's say
a rune a year for the kit!

Let's keep it that way
till one of us can't make it.

10.

When that does happen,
I'll tell you what, Alf,

when the big doors don't open
and things fall off the shelf

11.

I'll give what I've got
to see you through,

and if I'm not
there, I'll be waiting for you.



Sam Hunt is one of New Zealand's best-known poets. For over 40 years he has been touring the length and breadth of the country performing his poems in pubs, theatres, schools and countless other venues. He has introduced poetry to generations of New Zealanders. He has two recent and now a new book plus an ongoing live schedule. *Doubtless*, *James K. Baxter Poems* and *Backroads - charting a poet's life* are his latest books. Sam has recently collaborated with David Kilgour (*The Clean*) in live shows and a CD *Falling Debris*. Sam was born in Castor Bay, Auckland; lived 30 years on and around Cook Strait, now he lives on a far reach of Kaipara Harbour with his 12 year old son. (Check out www.samhunt.co.nz)



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