Motho ke Motho ka Batho Babang (A Person is a Person Because of Other People)  
Jeremy Cronin (1949–)  
Political/Activist/Protest

Poem captures scene of one prisoner communicating with another discreetly under watchful eye of a warden. Cleverness shown maintaining human contact communicating with sign language in defiance of the deprivation of imprisonment. Illustrates truth about the human condition. Cruelty of isolation as a form of punishment and favoured treatment of political prisoners

1. By holding my mirror out of the window I see
2. Clear to the end of the passage.
3. There's a person down there.
4. A prisoner polishing a doorknob.
5. In the mirror I see him see
6. My face in the mirror,
7. I see the fingertips of his free hand
8. Bunch together, as if to make
9. An object the size of a badge
10. Which travels up to his forehead
11. The place of an imaginary cap.
12. (This means: A warden.)
13. Two fingers are extended in a vee
14. And wiggle like two antennae.
15. (He's being watched.)
16. A finger of his free hand makes a watch-hand's arc
17. On the wrist of his polishing arm without
18. Disrupting the slow-slow rhythm of his work.
19. (Later. Maybe, later we can speak.)
20. Hey! Wat maak jy daar?
21. —a voice from around the corner.
22. No, just polishing baas.
23. He turns his back to me, now watch
24. His free hand, the talkative one,
25. Slips quietly behind
26. (Strength brother, it says,
27. In my mirror,
28. A black fist.)