

Multipurpose Handwashing

I turn the hot water nozzle, make sure it's boiling
Pushing the soap dispenser, I relish slippery cold
I lather until friction reaches muscles, tendons, and nerves
Scrubbing off skin until the sensation seeps away

Handwashing to rinse off sandwich crumbs, they're sticky and cling to my fingertips
Handwashing so germs are killed by chemicals, I want to hold my lover's hand safely
Handwashing so disease agents don't reach my frail grandma, she had a fall last week, bedridden
now, my dad is worried sick
Handwashing to follow doctor's orders, we have to keep the medical bills low, my mom tells me,
she asks if she should take on more hours, a second job

Handwashing in place of a diary or journal, why would I write this down for someone to find?
Handwashing like it's my confessional box, when I leave this church, I'll be squeaky clean
Handwashing to avoid speaking the unspeakable, these bubbles are my censorship, filtering
microbes, words, before they spread
Handwashing so soapsuds obscure blood only I see, bleeding from my carotid, I refuse medical
help, in my crimson hospital bed, the ER doctors let me go home

I turn the hot water nozzle, steam hides my reflection
Pushing the soap dispenser—there's none left
Still, I lather until bubble touches bone
Scrubbing off skin until the sensation seeps away