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KATHLEEN FLENNIKEN

The Physiology of Joy

In the bleakest centers of the body, researchers
have discovered tiny pockets of joy,
like the undersized bubbles that cling
to the corners of parched mouths.

We're trying to understand, the spokesman said.
He was staring into the camera. They might be
an immune system response to pain
or evidence that joy
in order to be released
must coalesce to a critical mass.
Then he leaned into our living room
to confide

that in his college anatomy class,
sometimes the bodies would sigh
at the end of a long dissection,
an unaccountable flutter under his hands.
Once he was last one out
of that blue gymnasium of a laboratory.
I don't know if it's proof, he said,

but when I switched off the lights
the transom windows glowed.