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Kathleen Flenniken

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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.