

The Racist Bone

By Cornelius Eady

I know this is a real thing, because
When I was a kid, my big sister took me
To the Capitol Theater, in my hometown
Of Rochester, NY,

And there was a movie that afternoon,
The Tingler, which starred Vincent Price,
And what I remember best about the film
Was that it was about this extra, insect-like gland, that

We all appeared to have been born with,
But nobody but sci-fi movie scientists knew about.
If it wasn't fed properly, it would crawl up
Your leg, and choke you to death with its claws!

Your only hope was if you saw it coming, and knew
What it was, you could scream—loud.
Which we did, when it crawled across the screen.
Then the lights blacked out, and Vincent Price

Shouted it had skittered off the screen, hungry—which it hadn't;
The Capitol was the Black movie house—25 cents a seat,
The last drop of profit squeezed from the theatrical run.
No need to pull Mr. Castle's hokey string and rubber model

Down the aisle for the likes of us.
In our heads *The Tingler* scurried, our darkest screams,
The horror we know, but won't talk about,
From the mouth of the corpse

Like a weevil, looking for a home.
So many characters perished
In that movie—they never believed they had it in them
Until those pincers closed.

Source: *Poetry* (March 2021)