

# Earwig- The Deadlift

Tue, 1/26 4:56PM 15:16

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

eyes, thighs, lift, feel, stronger, muscle, deadlift, lifting, lighten, smith, arms, hold, close, folk, tire, body, imagined, space, bicep curls, shoulders

## SPEAKERS

A, Tron Creative, B, Danny Krass

- D** Danny Krass 00:00  
Hi, my name's Danny Krass. Welcome to Earwig. This is a sonic theatre podcast specifically designed for listening on headphones. For our first episode, we present The Deadlift by Stef Smith. Directed by Finn den Hertog performed by Ashley Smith and Renee Williams, with live percussion by Alon Ilisar, all other composition and production by me, Danny Krass. Here it is- The Deadlift.
- B** 01:03  
I close my eyes, engage my arms, my thighs, my back, and lift. Pull with my arms, push my feet into the ground, keeping lifting, shoulders back, keeping lifting. Locked up to top my thigh. Up right. Alive. And then back down. Rest. Unwrap. Breathe.
- A** 01:49  
It turns out, I'm not the woman I imagined, which is quite the thing to find that out nearly halfway through life. I am not the woman I imagined I'd become. I'm shorter, slower, and stronger. It's only after these last few months of everything, all this everything that I figured that out. And it all started because I needed something new to do. I longed for something new to do, something just mine, not the kids, not his- mine. So I pulled out my lycra and left for the gym. Because it's the only place I thought I could truly be a stranger. The anonymity of a new me. I spent half a lifetime avoiding this. And now I pay a monthly

membership. Both small and profound the change. Though I still have pains like I don't belong here. But still, here I am.

**B** 03:05  
I close my eyes

**A** 03:07  
because I want to feel brave.

**B** 03:09  
Engage my arms, my thighs, my back

**A** 03:13  
because I want to see what my body can do.

**B** 03:16  
And lift.

**A** 03:18  
So here I am.

**B** 03:22  
And then back down. Rest. Unwrap. Breathe. I focus on my breath. And again. I close my eyes. Engage my arms, my thighs, my back and lift, pull with my arms. Push my feet into the ground. Keeping lifting. Shoulders back, keeping lifting, locked up to top my thigh. Upright. Alive. And then back down. Rest. Unwrap. Breathe. I find it easier with my eyes closed. Always have done. I've tried to train with my eyes open, fixed on a point just in front of me. But still, I find it easier with my eyes closed. Something about the focus, shutting everything down and out. Hush the hurry, and heave. Responsibilities and inadequacies. I close my eyes. I should almost definitely have my eyes open. But I don't.

A 04:53  
I haven't really spoken to anyone. Disclosed any details of my life. Undefined except by my tired eyes. It's been years since I've done something new.

B 04:53  
I close my eyes.

A 05:14  
I forgotten what it's like to learn. So been watching videos at work, doing bicep curls with tins of tomatoes. Taking up a little more space, I suppose. Not shirking. Taking up space. Strong.

B 05:33  
...my thighs, my back, and lift.

A 05:35  
I suppose I feel just a tiny bit stronger. And that feels nice.... That's impressive.

B 05:51  
Did you say something?

A 05:52  
Sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt. I was just saying, "that's impressive."

B 05:58  
Alright. Yeah. Thanks.

A 06:02  
I didn't mean to interrupt. Sorry.

- B** 06:04  
It's okay. And this is nothing really compared to what I used to do.
- A** 06:09  
Still. I think it's impressive.
- B** 06:12  
Thanks.
- A** 06:13  
You've been training for a while?
- B** 06:15  
Yeah. A good while. I had to take some time off in the last year. You know how it goes...
- A** 06:21  
Sure. I've only just started, just trying it. Always wanted to, and then I couldn't think of a reason why not. So I just did it.
- B** 06:31  
Good for you.
- A** 06:33  
Yeah, I still don't know if I'm doing it right.
- B** 06:36  
You're not. I mean, you're not doing it horribly wrong, but.... take your feet slightly further apart. And make sure you lock your shoulders when you get to the top. Otherwise, it doesn't really count.

A 06:50  
Okay.

B 06:51  
You'll get there. Starting is the hardest part. Though second hardest is sticking with it.

A 06:58  
Sure.

B 07:05  
I close my eyes, engage my heart, my hands, my hope. Push down on the world. Lift up what you hold in your hands. I close my eyes. Drinking during dark days and long winters. If I'm not careful, early evenings creep into the afternoon. Mornings melt away into the scroll of a screen. But brute force braces me. Makes me stronger. Somehow. This will be the year that will define us all. Until the next defining year. Upright. Alive. Lifting to lighten the load, every minute on the minute. Lifting to lighten the loss. And there has been loss, longing, loving and laughing. And my palms peel from picking up weights. I lift to lighten the burden. Being. My hands hurt. So my heart doesn't. My hands hurt so my heart doesn't.

A 08:39  
It hurts just here.

B 08:42  
You should be careful. Does it hurt on the joint?

A 08:46  
No.

B 08:47  
That's good.



A 08:49

Just tired, probably.



B 08:51

A good sleep can make the difference.



A 08:54

I'm finding it hard to sleep at the moment. Too much news, too much noise.



B 09:00

Yeah. I get that.



A 09:03

Everything is shifting. I feel like I can't keep up with it.



B 09:07

But that's why this is good. Consistent. Just moving a weight, up and down. Up and down.



A 09:18

I learned I lift until failure which is to say I lift until I simply cannot do it anymore. The barbell doesn't budge. My muscles turn into jelly and I feel my heartbeat in my head. I lift until I can't do it anymore. And I go home and cook the kids dinner.



B 09:50

Engage my arms, my thighs, my back and lift. Lock my shoulder. Quadriceps, glutes, hamstrings, lats, traps, in between my shoulder blades, the inside of my thigh, and pull. Tire out the body, drain out the doom. Replace with dopamine and endorphins. A completely chemical therapy of all the things I need to get out of me. Tire out to the animal of anxiety. Rest. Repeat. A microcosm of a culture of conditioning and lifting, letting go of the ache that won't leave. My knees, I feel it in my knees. Sometimes I don't. Sometimes I feel like a superhero. Sometimes I feel like a person just holding on. Holding on to a bar and moving weights up and down. Tire out the body, the animal of anxiety. I

lost my mother and my job in the space of six months. There is a lot to be sorry about. There isn't much to feel strong about. But every day, I get up and I come here to be alone with other people. Been thinking about getting a cat. A rescue. I like that idea. The two of us, unwanted and forgotten. Finding each other. A little less alone. I like that idea.

A 11:59  
How's that?

B 12:01  
You've been getting better at that.

A 12:03  
You think?

B 12:03  
Sure.

A 12:05  
I don't feel like I'm moving much today.

B 12:07  
But more than you could.

A 12:09  
True. You on your lunch break? You work around here?

B 12:13  
Nah. I'm not doing much at the moment.

A 12:17

Sometimes this is the only reason I leave the house.

B 12:20  
At least you leave- can leave.

A 12:23  
Yeah. Gratitude and all that.

B 12:25  
Aye. Something like that. Something like gratitude. You should try a reverse grip. I think if you hold it like this. Yeah. Yeah, like that. You might be able to shift more.

A 12:42  
Feels weird, but good-weird.

B 12:45  
Sometimes if you change your grip to something a bit different, can take a bit of getting used to. It's worth trying. Changing the way you hold something.

A 12:53  
Thanks. People aren't too chatty around here, are they?

B 12:58  
Folk not wanting to get too close. Or folk just wanting to just zone out. Or shy. Plenty of shy folk masking it with bravado.

A 13:08  
I'm sure you're right. What did you say your name was?

B 13:13



I like the white noise of muscle-ache. The noise of metal on metal, sweat and swearing, bodies bulging. And despite everything, all this awful, I stop and take a breath. And I feel thankful. Lungs that can breathe air. I am thankful. Hands that can hold on. I am thankful. And for a moment, I feel like I'm keeping death at the door. Dead-lifting death away.

A

A 13:57

Plenty of peacocking in this place. Plenty of people trying to push and pull themselves into being someone new. And I don't know what I'd do if I felt the need to change so much of me. Though yesterday in the shower, I felt a little bump on my arm. But not a bad one. A miniscule muscle bubbling up to the surface. Who knew I'd be that woman. The small sharp stab of a surprise even after all this time. Who knows who I'll become next. So I just close my eyes. Engage my arms, my thighs, my back. And lift.

T

Tron Creative 14:57

The Deadlift by Stef Smith, © Stef Smith 2021. This transcript is published by arrangement with Stef Smith. All rights reserved.