



THE  
**CrossFit** JOURNAL

# TRUE WARRIORS

In one of America's safest communities, an affiliate owner and his wife found themselves in a desperate fight for their lives.

BY ANDRÉA MARIA CECIL

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King County Sheriff’s deputies believe the assailant who invaded Tennyson Jacobson’s childhood home (background) monitored it from this wooded area.



Inside the house where it all happened, Tennyson Jacobson recounts to CrossFit Journal staff writer Andréa Maria Cecil how a stranger invaded her home twice in a 24-hour span in 2013.

There was no reason to lock the door.

In North Bend, Washington, no one locks the door.

“We haven’t had keys in 10 years,” Tennyson Jacobson said of her childhood home across from a farm at the base of Mount Si.

A picturesque place, North Bend is quintessentially Washington. It sits in the foothills of the Cascade Range roughly 30 miles east of Seattle, its streets lined with small flowering trees complemented by the backdrop of lush, gargantuan hills. Along with neighboring city Snoqualmie, it was the filming location for the 1990s TV drama “Twin Peaks.”

“It’s a pretty quiet community,” said Det. Christina Bartlett of the King County Sheriff’s Department Major Crimes Unit.

In all of 2012, the city of 6,200 people reported one criminal homicide and zero residential robberies, according to the sheriff’s office.

“Home robberies—we do get some. In terms of home-invasion

robberies, they’re infrequent, and when they are, they are typically targeted,” said Bartlett, who has been with the sheriff’s office for 25 years.

So when a 6-foot, 220-lb. man approached the French doors of Jacobson’s parents’ house just after 1 p.m., her first thought was to greet the visitor at the home’s entrance.

It was the last time she would leave a door unlocked.

MOTHER’S DAY

It was Sunday, May 12, 2013—Mother’s Day. Jacobson wasn’t expecting anyone.

“He’s walking with intent and purpose,” she recounted while standing in the dining room of the home where she, her husband and her then-7-month-old daughter had been living two years ago.

In that fraction of a second, she realized the stranger’s intentions were not good. He opened the door and walked in the house.

In that fraction of a second, she realized the stranger’s intentions were not good.

Panicked, she quickly turned away from the door and in the direction of her baby, who was lying on the floor. But the stranger already had her.

“He grabbed me by the ponytail and threw me over the couch,” Jacobson said.

She started screaming.

“He covered my mouth and said, ‘Don’t worry, I won’t hurt you. I just want your money.’”

Jacobson had \$41 in her child’s diaper bag.

The stranger—still holding tight to her hair—led her over to the bag near the French doors. After he pocketed the bills, he stopped and stared 26-year-old Jacobson in the eyes.

She described his gaze as “possessed.”

“It was this look of ... ‘I hate you.’”

Then he slapped her across the left side of her face so hard she fell to the floor, twisting her right ankle. The stranger’s hat fell off. Then he ran out the French doors, jumped over the white railing and headed south.

Jacobson’s mother, Rosalyn Kaplan, had been showering. About 30 seconds after the stranger fled, she came out of her room to find her daughter hysterically crying. That’s when Jacobson called 911. As the dispatcher asked an audibly shaken Jacobson for details, Jacobson’s baby wailed in the background.





Dave Re/CrossFit Journal

This was Kyle Jacobson's vantage point when he saw the stranger come around the bend in the hallway and then charge him in the early morning hours of May 13, 2013.

“Did they break in the door or what happened?” the female dispatcher asked.

“He just walked right in the door,” Jacobson said indignantly.

“Was it unlocked?”

“Yes.”

King County Sheriff’s deputies arrived at the home nearly seven minutes later. A tracking team with a dog was called to search the area for the stranger. But the scent went cold and the team ended its efforts after about 40 minutes.

Jacobson called her husband, Kyle, who grabbed a buddy and rushed 10 miles home from Cascade CrossFit, the affiliate the couple runs.

Meanwhile, officers assured Tennyson she would be safe.

“In 35 years,” one officer told her, “I’ve never seen someone come back.”

“WHY DID HE COME BACK?”

Later on May 12, Kyle took Tennyson out for a Mother’s Day dinner. She couldn’t relax.

“I was scared to death.”

Before going to sleep, she checked, double checked and triple checked the home’s windows and doors, ensuring every single one was locked.

At around 10:30 p.m., the couple went to bed, with their baby fast asleep in a neighboring bedroom. Leaning on the wall next to him, Kyle had the same 31-inch wooden Louisville Slugger he had kept by his bedside for years. On the nightstand, he set a can of Hot Shot wasp spray he had bought months earlier. A cop buddy had told Kyle, a firefighter, wasp spray was as effective as pepper spray.

Roughly three hours later, the couple’s pair of Yorkshire terriers started barking. That was not unusual. Given their tiny bladders, it was normal for Lola and Lily to require a middle-of-the-night outing.

“They would always get up and go to the bathroom,” Tennyson explained.

Kyle coaxed himself out of bed.

“She says, ‘Grab the bat.’ And I wasn’t thinkin’ anything,” he said. “I went to take out the dogs.”

As he walked out of the bedroom—wasp spray in hand—and headed toward a second door leading directly into the hallway, Lola and Lily started growling.

Concerned they would wake up his daughter, he gave the Yorkies a tight-lipped “shut up.” Then he opened the door to the hallway. Only Lola darted out. Kyle followed her down the hallway. But when she reached the French doors, she ran right back from where they had come. Kyle, confused, was left standing in front of the doors. His eyes followed Lola’s path back to the bedroom. That’s when he saw someone emerge around a bend in the dimly lit hallway, roughly 30 feet away—near the door Kyle had just exited.

“I remember saying, ‘Oh my God, oh my God.’”

The stranger charged.

Kyle squirted wasp spray into his eyes.

“It just looked like it pissed him off. It did nothing.”

Kyle—5-foot-10 and 185 lb. at the time—grabbed the stranger’s shirt with his left hand and started punching him with his right.

“I hit him probably 15 times in the face and he didn’t react.”

He only growled.

“He took me down but I got on top of him. I got in front of him, put him in a headlock and tried to knee him in the face.”

By that point, Tennyson had heard the commotion.

“I knew right away,” she said of it being the same stranger.

She came running out of the bedroom with the bat just as the men went to the ground. She immediately began beating the stranger across the back.

“Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you!” she yelled as she struck him six times.

“The guy never even flinched,” Kyle remembered. “It was insane.”





Dave Re/CrossFit Journal

Kyle and Tennyson Jacobson re-enact Kyle's four-minute fight with the stranger who invaded the home where they lived in May 2013.



Courtesy of Kyle Jacobson

During the May 13, 2013, home invasion, the perpetrator pushed Kyle Jacobson backward about 20 feet across carpet. Kyle was wearing only shorts.

The bat broke into two jagged pieces. Tennyson briefly considered stabbing him with one of them.

“I can’t do that,” she thought.

So she grabbed the wasp spray and shot it directly in his eyes. Nothing.

Kyle, a former high-school wrestler, was trying to choke him out.

“I thought he was close, but I was tired.”

The two men had been fighting for more than 3 minutes. Then the stranger started to push.

Via an Army crawl, he moved Kyle, who was wearing only shorts, backward about 20 feet across carpet to the edge of the dining room. Kyle’s knees became open wounds from the rug burn. He didn’t notice.

The stranger resorted to trying to bite Kyle’s fingers and grab his testicles.

Kaplan, meanwhile, had rushed from her bedroom when she heard her daughter, who rarely curses, repeatedly yelling, “Fuck you.”

“It was like watching pure evil and pure good meet,” Kaplan said. “I’m remembering now it felt like slow motion.”

She hit the stranger in the crotch with the remaining halves of the bat and turned on her iPhone after Kyle told her to call 911.

Kyle was spent. He wouldn’t be able to hold the stranger much longer. The attacker was 35 lb. heavier and didn’t seem to feel pain.

“Tenny, I need help, I need help!” he yelled to his wife.

“As soon as he said, ‘I need help,’ it was a light switch,” Tennyson said.

She ran into the kitchen to the butcher block. It held two knives—one that was flimsy and the other that wasn’t. She grabbed the latter: a 9-inch “big, fat kitchen knife.”

“I just came over and started stabbing him.”

Tennyson plunged the butcher knife eight times into the stranger’s back and twice more into his abdomen, according to a sheriff’s report.

Kyle felt the air leave the stranger’s body. The stranger stopped moving. Kyle kept him pinned.

“I was so freaking petrified, I stayed on top of him for (another) three minutes.”

“I just came over and started stabbing him.”

—Tennyson Jacobson

More than a minute-and-a-half into Kaplan’s 911 call, Kyle can be heard in the background: “He’s dead.”

“He’s dead,” Kaplan repeated, then immediately asked, “Is he dead?”

She went on, hysterical to the point of almost being indiscernible: “He’s dead! No way, he’s dead! Oh, he’s dead!”

The dispatcher began to ask about the weapon; Tennyson took the phone.

“Hi, where is the knife at?” the male dispatcher calmly asked.

Tennyson spoke slowly with a childlike innocence: “It’s in my hand.”

She was wearing a tank top and shorts. Both were soaked in the stranger’s blood, which had also splattered over her arms and legs, the wall, and the carpet.

“Can you put it down?” the dispatcher asked.





Tennyson and Kyle Jacobson stand in the home where they were attacked in May 2013.

“I don’t want to put it down. What if,” she started, then sobbed.

Moments later, she set the knife on the floor.

“I didn’t know what to do,” she told the dispatcher.

Nearly two minutes later, Kyle got on the phone. As he stood 5 feet from the stranger’s lifeless body, he inhaled deeply and spoke like a man who didn’t believe what had happened.

“Oh my God, that creeped me out. Fuck.”

First responders arrived at the home about nine-and-a-half minutes after Kaplan made the call. Firefighters performed CPR on the stranger to no avail.

“Tennyson was visibly shaken,” read a sheriff’s report, “and kept saying ‘why did he come back, who is he....I killed him.’”

## THE STRANGER

Kenneth Boonstra’s criminal history might look insignificant to most: two shoplifting charges in Snoqualmie to which he pleaded guilty, according to police and published reports. There were also a handful of traffic citations, a charge of possessing alcohol as a minor in 1985 and a charge of third-degree theft that was later dismissed in a plea bargain, according to published reports.

The 48-year-old had a wife of 19 years and five children but got divorced in 2008. That, relatives told police, was Boonstra’s unraveling.

When detectives arrived at his parents’ home at 9:30 a.m. May 14, 2013, only his stepfather was there. He explained Boonstra had been living a normal life up until the split with his wife.

“He said that after the divorce Ken changed,” read a sheriff’s report.

His ex-wife “took him to the cleaners,” the stepfather told detectives.

“He said that she turned his kids against him so he is estranged from them,” according to the report.

Then Boonstra’s mother came home.

Bartlett asked her if she had heard about the previous day’s break-in.

“Yes, is that Ken?” she asked.

When Bartlett confirmed, Boonstra’s mother broke down crying.

“She said that he was a good boy. He was the oldest of her three sons and he would always try to help his brothers,” according to the report.

Boonstra’s mother told detectives her son had been paying his ex-wife \$5,000 a month in alimony until about two years ago, when he informed the state he could no longer afford it, quit his job and temporarily moved in with his biological father.

“She said that Ken told her that he was tormented and he couldn’t sleep. She said that they tried to help him and offered to pay for counseling, but he refused. He sent her emails talking about hallucinations like monkeys dragging him across his trailer and snakes. She said that he was a Christian when he was married, but after the divorce he seemed to give up on his spirituality. She said that she could hardly read his emails because they were too ‘freaky,’” the report read.

Bartlett asked if Boonstra had any girlfriends.

His mother answered that he did not.

“He didn’t like women after the divorce.”

Boonstra had maintained a YouTube channel known to his family. There he posted long rants—some nonsensical—in more than 30 videos often recorded inside his trailer that sat on the nearly 7 acres of land in North Bend he received in an estate settlement. His stepfather described them to detectives as “‘preachy’ and anti-women.”

In one pair of videos, Boonstra described girls and women as “miserable, horrible creatures” who have “rejected their natural function to be domestic” and are therefore “Satan’s minions, tools of the devil.”

“They have only one purpose and that’s to destroy you—to turn you into a eunuch. That’s what a girl wants to do because she wants to be equal to a man. A girl cannot be equal to a man. It’s impossible—physically, emotionally, mentally impossible—because she’s a girl. It’s just a fact.”





At nearly 5 foot 7 and usually 110 lb., Tennyson Jacobson described herself as “strong for my size.”



When Tennyson Jacobson is at Cascade CrossFit—the affiliate she runs with her husband, Kyle—her 2-year-old daughter usually comes along.

## “ALL PEOPLE ARE HUMAN WEAPONS”

Choice.

Boonstra had it when he chose not to walk out those French doors.

“(He) could have run down the hallway and run out the front door. He had been in the house earlier that day,” Bartlett said. “He made a conscious decision to not escape.”

Kyle had it when he stood his ground as Boonstra charged.

“I would venture to guess that if we could go back and measure that, he, for certain, had less than half a second to assess and respond. But by that time, Boonstra had already gotten to him,” the detective continued. “By that time, he’s already behind; Boonstra’s already on him.”

And Tennyson had it when she chose the sturdy butcher knife.

“When Kyle had been fighting for so long ... the way she came to his aid was so overly impressive,” Bartlett said. “She made that decision that she’s going to decide the outcome.”

“When you’re really in the fight for your life, you either fight or you give up. And that’s who you are.”

—Det. Christina Bartlett

While those in law enforcement frequently rehearse would-be scenarios in their minds so they can be prepared when a real-life situation erupts, most civilians do not, she noted.

“When you’re really in the fight for your life, you either fight or you give up. And that’s who you are. I don’t think that, for the most part, that’s something that’s a conscious decision. And both of them are very strong—both physically and emotionally.”

Bartlett added: “The great thing about this case is that Kyle and Tennyson survived. Because in a lot of our cases, they don’t survive.”

Still, Tennyson has said that had she been alone in the house, she wouldn’t have stood a chance.

“Even though I’m strong and I’m scrappy ... you have to be realistic,” said the nearly 5-foot-7, 110-lb. woman.

Bartlett and Tony Blauer disagreed with the idea that Tennyson wouldn’t have been able to successfully defend herself.

“Could she have held her own?” Bartlett said. “We have lots of (female) deputies that are very small in stature, and they were still able to overcome.”

And the fact of the matter is Tennyson—contrary to her statement to the 911 dispatcher—knew exactly what to do.

“The bottom line is this wasn’t a sport fight. ... She found the weapon. The knife didn’t stab the guy. It wasn’t an electric knife ... it wasn’t a Bluetooth knife,” explained Blauer, founder of Blauer Tactical Systems, a company specializing in the research and development of close-quarters tactics and scenario-based training for law enforcement, military and professional self-defense instructors. Blauer is also the founder of the CrossFit Defense program.

“What I believe is that all people are human weapons. They just don’t realize it. ... Cavemen didn’t get their yellow belt.”





Dave Re/CrossFit Journal

After the incident in which Kyle and Tennyson Jacobson killed a home intruder, they couldn't so much as sleep alone.

All too often, Blauer hears women in his course identify their size and strength as reasons why they wouldn't be able to fend off a male attacker. During a recent trip to Spain, a course participant kept insisting, "But if somebody's bigger, you can't."

"I went, 'Listen, yeah, size matters. But you can look at it as, 'He can deadlift 500 lb. and I can only deadlift 50 lb.'" You need to drop your 50 lb. on his head before he drops his 500 lb."

Blauer continued: "'The big guy is stronger, but maybe you're looking at the wrong part of his size.' People look at a big guy and they see how big he is and they're looking at his muscles."

But just as his muscles are larger, so, too, are all the places that can be attacked—like his neck and his crotch.

"Oh, good ... he's got bigger balls for me to hit," is what you should be thinking, Blauer said. "It might seem like I'm being cute and cavalier, but it's the only way to think."

And in those seconds on the morning of May 13, 2013, Tennyson made the choice that saved her and her family.

"Clearly this could have gone either way. Easily," Bartlett said. "If even one of them hesitated, it would have been a different outcome. They're amazing people."

She added: "They're truly warriors. Both of them."

## TWO YEARS LATER

Today, life is different for Kyle and Tennyson.

They finished building their own home in an unincorporated city in another part of King County. The home has a fence with a gate, an alarm system and security cameras monitoring the perimeter. They also have a 75-lb. German shepherd named Ludo, two revolvers and a metal baseball bat.

"Now I'm a freak about locking the door," Tennyson said as the couple sat at the dining-room table.

And it's given them a different perspective.

"For me, it's opened my eyes (that) the world can be a scary place," she continued. "We go to church, we don't do crazy things, we don't meet weird people."

"It made us big gun believers," Kyle added.

If Boonstra had had any kind of weapon, "I would have been so screwed."

Kyle continued: "If I hadn't been in shape, it would have been no bueno."

The incident also made the couple hyper aware of its surroundings.



Dave Re/CrossFit Journal

In the months following the attack, members and coaches at Cascade CrossFit pulled together to assist the Jacobsons.

"I feel like I judge everyone," Kyle said.

Immediately following the incident, neither could so much as drive anywhere.

"It was a month, honestly, where we didn't do a damn thing," Kyle said.

When his station found out what happened, it took about 30 minutes for Kyle's fellow firefighters to volunteer to cover all his shifts for the next three months.

It would be another month before they could coach at their affiliate again. And when they did, it was only for the classes that occurred during daylight.

Admittedly, Tennyson said, they were "not the best" at running the business during that time. But the community stepped in with coaches covering classes, members establishing a meal train and writing letters of support, and other area affiliate owners hosting fundraisers.

Hours after the incident, the couple moved in with Kyle's parents, pulling a mattress into their bedroom so they wouldn't have to sleep alone.

"I would never do that now," Tennyson said, laughing.

They saw a therapist and took medication for their anxiety and to help them sleep. Tennyson is still on antidepressants.

"I used to wake up all the time making noises like I was getting choked," Kyle said.

In the months following the incident, if Tennyson had to make a visit to the house where it happened—even in the middle of the day—her heart would pound and she would start to sweat.

And Kyle still doesn't like coming home when it's dark. When he does, he sends Ludo in ahead of him to clear every single room in the house before he can relax.

"It changed us a lot—that's for sure."

Their experience also affected their family and friends.

"It was a real eye-opener, especially out here," said Cody Turcotte, a Cascade CrossFit coach. "Growing up, we left the doors unlocked all the time."

Turcotte went to high school with the couple and wrestled with Kyle, who is a member of Cascade CrossFit's competitive team.

For Turcotte, the incident highlighted one thing: "How important it is to be strong."





## FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FREEZE

To this day, police do not know how Boonstra got into the home in the early morning hours of May 13. They will also never know his intentions. But they have educated guesses.

“Sexual assault, probably,” Bartlett said.

In his pockets, Boonstra had a flashlight, duct tape, a digital camera and a tripod. He died wearing blue-and-white gardening gloves.

“In my entire career, I cannot remember a single case in which we had a stranger come in, do a home-invasion robbery and return that same night.”

Deputies tried to ease Tennyson’s concerns after the first incident, Bartlett said.

Instead, it was Tennyson’s “worst nightmare come true.”

Sometimes, when she’s out among strangers, Tennyson wonders if they’d be frightened of her if they knew she killed someone. Although she was shaken by her own act in the hours that followed, Boonstra’s death does not bother her today.

“Right when I asked  
for help, she didn’t  
hesitate. She grabbed the  
knife and stabbed him.  
She doesn’t have a mean  
bone in her body.”

—Kyle Jacobson

“I don’t care at all. At all. I thought I would struggle with that. But I do not,” she said. “He looked so evil to me. I just knew he was so bad.”

For his part, Kyle is impressed with his wife.

“Right when I asked for help, she didn’t hesitate. She grabbed the knife and stabbed him. She doesn’t have a mean bone in her body.”

Tennyson noted: “Kyle asked for help—that never happens.”

In the investigation that followed Boonstra’s death, Bartlett told them that their options were fight, flight or freeze.

“What I chose to do under pressure was fight,” Tennyson said.

“It wasn’t a choice,” Kyle added. “I wasn’t going to run away.”

“He was going to try to hurt us. ... He was going to rape me,” Tennyson said.

Kyle also said he feels no remorse for Boonstra’s death.

“It makes me know we can get done what needs to get done,” he said.

Still, he does have one regret: He wished he could have warned Boonstra.

“You’re about to get stabbed. I hope it was worth it.”

Stabbed, no less, by one of the “miserable, horrible creatures.” ■

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andréa Maria Cecil is a CrossFit Journal staff writer and editor.

The lead detective on the case called Kyle and Tennyson Jacobson “true warriors” for choosing to fight when an intruder got inside their home in May 2013.