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Joe Drennan's case must be a watershed moment

EVERY now and then, a case comes along that changes the way we look at particular crimes, as a country, as individuals and, perhaps most importantly, as a society demanding justice.

Just recently Natasha O'Brien, in yelling from the rooftops about the suspended sentence imposed on the soldier who beat her senseless, spurred a national outcry with her visceral outrage. We'd grown wearily indifferent to lenient sentencing of men convicted of savage assaults on defenceless women. But thanks to Natasha, and the recent Court of Appeal reversal of that decision, it may be a while before another bullying thug walks smirking from court.

Obscenity

Back in August 2016, Alan Hawe's coffin, draped in his local GAA club jersey, was carried into the church alongside those of the victims he butchered, his wife and his three young sons. It took the horrified indignation of Clodagh Hawe's family to highlight the obscenity of burying a man like Alan Hawe with his victims, to challenge the implicit absolution in the unspoken consensus that 'the poor man just snapped'.

The Hawe family massacre changed forever the way we talk about evil psychopaths who murder their families.

If we are serious about road deaths, and if our judicial system is truly to prioritise the rights of decent people to go safely about their blameless, hard-working lives, then the case of Joe Drennan must be another watershed moment in the evolution of a just, civilised, mature society.

Joe was a 21-year-old student who had a part-time job at a restaurant to fund his journalism studies in the University of Limerick. On a chilly Friday night in October 2023 he was waiting for a bus after finishing his shift. But career criminal Kieran Fogarty, also 21, suffered no such inconvenience.

Though he'd never worked an honest day in his life, Fogarty was driving a 5 Series BMW that same

night; as a violent drug dealer, part of an armed gang peddling hard drugs in Limerick, he could openly live high on the hog from the proceeds of his crimes. Tax and insurance are only for honest people, so Fogarty didn't bother with such legal niceties, and the fact that he was disqualified from driving didn't hamper him either.

While Joe, from Mountrath in Co. Laois, was studying for his Leaving Cert and winning the points for the college course of his dreams, Fogarty was notching up 46 previous convictions, all funded by legal aid courtesy of tax-paying suckers, freeing him to swan about in his Beamer.

His criminal gang was feuding, most likely in a drugs turf war

with another criminal cohort, and in April 2023 Fogarty had made a serious death threat against a man called Raymond Collins. Shortly afterwards he fired three shots from a handgun, a drive-by shooting carried out in an estate where children were playing in Limerick.

That night in October 2023, Fogarty was on bail for a number of offences – he later pleaded guilty to producing an iron bar during a violent disorder in Limerick city, and possessing more than €14,000 worth of cocaine for sale or supply.

While Joe waited for his bus home, tired after his evening's work, Fogarty was speeding through Limerick city at up to

Lively row is all a bit rich

AT FIRST, the row between Blake Lively and Justin Baldoni over the filming of *It Ends With Us* was mildly diverting, since there's nothing like a vicious spat between rich, privileged people to offer gratifying proof of that old saying about money and happiness. Then it became intriguing – just who exactly was the baddie here? Both sides claimed that they were vindicated by some raw footage of the pair filming a flirty dance scene – but it looked perfectly harmless and amicable, with no sign of anyone being harassed or demeaned. As the vendetta drags on and gets murkier by the day, though, the reality is we're getting a raw glimpse of just how self-absorbed and cocooned from reality these people truly are, and it's just plain irritating. I wish it would end with them.

Up close and personal: Blake Lively and co-star Justin Baldoni



prints off the car as Joe lay pinned beneath it.

I'll go out on a limb here and say that I don't believe that Kieran Fogarty's entire life is worth Joe Drennan's little finger. And yet while Joe lost his life that night, his killer won't even lose his twenties; in court last week Fogarty was jailed for eight years for the drive-by shooting. And then, to the entirely understandable disgust of the Drennan family, Judge Colin Daly announced that a lesser sentence of just six-and-a-half years for killing Joe would run concurrently. With remission and time served, Fogarty will be free before he's 28.

Disbelief

As the judge stood up to leave the court, Joe's father Tim called out in disbelief: 'Sorry, your honour, does that mean this fella will not serve a day for killing my son?' That's right, he apologised to the court for speaking up, because that's what decent people do – they respect the law.

Unfortunately, he did not get an answer, and I suspect that most people will support the Drennan family in their belief that they did not get justice either.

As Joe's distraught sister Sarah put it, her brother's death was no accident; it was the result of a 'choice' by Fogarty, who'd been filming his high-speed chase on his phone seconds before the crash. The Drennans have called on the Director of Public Prosecutions to appeal the concurrent sentences and ensure Fogarty serves time for killing Joe.

Anyone who cares about justice, about road deaths, and about the bewildering impunity enjoyed by the very worst criminals in the land must join them in their campaign.

Every now and then, a case comes along that snaps the public out of resigned acceptance and into instinctive outrage – for all our sakes, in the interests of respect for the law and for human life, this must be one such case.

Tariffs may put brakes on Trump

DONALD Trump, right, once boasted he could shoot someone dead on Fifth Avenue 'and I wouldn't lose any voters'. And there's no doubt that's absolutely true – if Americans can tolerate children being shot dead in their classrooms rather than relinquish their guns, they'd happily suck up a rander being taken out by their messiah in broad daylight.

But would they suck up a massive hike in the cost of their cars? Car parts move

across the US borders with Mexico and Canada several times before the motor rolls off the assembly line, and if he goes ahead with the threatened tariffs in March, these will now attract a 25% tariff each time.

Will voters suck up the estimated \$1,170 these taxes will cost every US household, given they elected him on a promise to cut inflation? And however much they love him, how happily will they suck up the 'pain' he's telling them to expect?



Lay off those pecks, Becks!

I'VE no doubt he's a wonderful father, but there's still something a tad creepy about David Beckham's insistence on kissing his children on the lips. After he was criticised for one such picture in 2017, he insisted: 'It's how I was brought up, and Victoria, and it's how we are with our children.' Which was all well and good when they were nippers, but it looks as if his daughter Harper isn't so cool with the practice anymore. At the

launch of his Hugo Boss underwear range last week, he was snapped making two attempts to kiss Harper on the lips – perhaps she was already uncomfortable at being surrounded by fashion shots of her dad 'manspreading' in tight jocks, but she swerved him both times and offered her cheek instead. Melania Trump's wide-brimmed boater, which kept Donald at a safe distance during his inauguration, would have come in very handy.