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‘9-1-1’ Shocker: Peter Krause, Angela Bassett Break Down That Shocking Character Exit; Creator Explains Why and How It Will Shake Up the Show After 8 Seasons

By Jennifer Maas Apr 17, 2025 6:00pm PT

ABC’s “9-1-1” broke long-running TV procedural precedent this week by killing off not just a main character, but the show’s *leading* male actor: Captain Bobby Nash, played by “Six Feet Under” and “Parenthood” alum Peter Krause.

Rumors have been swirling about Krause’s potential exit for the past few weeks following images surfacing across social media of the “9-1-1” crew shooting a large-scale funeral scene in downtown Los Angeles (in addition to the title of the season’s next episode, “The Last Alarm”). After eight seasons and nine years playing captain of LAFD’s Station 118, Krause understands the impact Bobby’s death will have on viewers who were already suspicious his time was up.

“I’ve heard that many fans are upset by this loss and they have a right to be. It is a loss,” Krause said in a statement on Thursday. “That said, it was more than a bold creative choice on a bold show. Bobby Nash was written in sacrifice and he was built for this. First responders risk their lives on the job so that others can see another day. His story arc honors them. We at ‘9-1-1’ salute all the incredible men and women who do these dangerous jobs and strive to keep us safe. Our show is incredibly difficult to make at times with long hours, challenging stunts and elaborate disasters. We couldn’t do it without each other.”

Krause had starred on “9-1-1” since the Ryan Murphy-produced series debuted eight seasons ago, originally on Fox. In Thursday’s episode of “9-1-1,” “Lab Rats,” Bobby met his end as heroically as the character lived — when he sacrificed his chance to be

saved from a deadly virus by giving the only vial of vaccine available to his crew member Chimney (played by Kenneth Choi).

The choice Bobby makes was revealed to both the "9-1-1" audience and the character's wife, LAPD sergeant Athena Grant-Nash (Angela Bassett), in the final moments of the episode. Speaking via a protective barrier, Bobby struggled through coughs of blood to give an emotional goodbye speech to Athena. Then he walked over to a table, kneeled down and claspsed his hands in prayer before his body gave out from the infection.

The episode ended with Athena, Chimney, Buck (Oliver Stark), Hen (Aisha Hinds), Maddie (Jennifer Love Hewitt) and the rest of the 118 all in mourning over the sudden turn of events. As medics cart out Bobby's zipped up body bag, his captain's helmet was left behind.

The image is sure to be a hard pill to swallow for fans of "9-1-1," as no major cast member has left the series since Connie Britton way back at the end of Season 1 (and that exit was not via character death). Nonetheless, "9-1-1" showrunner Tim Minear said he needed the outcome to be "unambiguous."

"I had to convince everybody about this," Minear told *Variety*. "The network was not like, 'Yeah, get rid of him, it'll save us money.' It was nothing like that. I had to pitch this at the highest levels and just walk through the whole story and try to infect them — funny choice of words, given the storyline — because, as I pitched it, you could understand, as a writer, how suddenly the whole world felt more alive. It felt more real because this thing had happened."

The final scene between Bobby and Athena was "shot a couple of different ways," Bassett said. "Different scenarios and endings, but one thing was always clear: the tie between the two of them, the bond between the two of them," she added. "And when we looked into each other's eyes, I think we were there emotionally, and that told the story. And I think that probably told the story when it reached editing, too. That this is the emotion, right here in this moment between the two of them."

Bassett, who has starred with Krause "9-1-1" from the start (their characters have been in an on-screen romantic relationship since Season 2), said Krause was "such a trouper" throughout the making of the episode. "He made you feel as okay with it as he could, but it was difficult for both of us," she said. "And then I just had a sense of

humor about, 'Well, I've died twice. I've had a couple of characters who died a horrible death, so I know how you feel. It's going to be alright.' Well, *we're* going to be alright, we'll see how the audience feels."

With three episodes left in Season 8 and a Season 9 renewal already secured, Bassett said she has "not dared" to ask Minear about what comes next: "But part of me can't help but think that that means more is going to land on Athena's shoulders." Bassett added that she's pretty sure Athena is "probably done" with relationships.

"It was just surprising, very surprising, because we just didn't see this coming," Bassett said. "It's been eight years of us being superheroes of sorts, and making it through incredibly dangerous scenarios — but we all make it through. So when we read this, when I read the script, it was very puzzling. And then I got an opportunity to talk to Tim and to ask why, and is he sure, and why are we going down this road, because Athena and Bobby were so happy together and such a team together? It was sad."

See Krause's full statement about his exit from "9-1-1" below, followed by *Variety*'s interview with Minear about Bobby's death and how the show will move forward.

I would like to thank Dana Walden, Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk and Tim Minear for entrusting me with such a complex character over these nine years. It has been my honor to portray Captain Bobby Nash.

In October 2017, through him, we began tackling topics such as grief, guilt, anger and addiction while exploring his relationship with a higher power, forgiveness and grace. On his path of healing, we watched him join and embrace both his new family at the firehouse and his new family with Athena Grant where he found love and acceptance. We also had plenty of fun along the way. It was a joy.

Humbled by working in step with our technical advisor, Chief Mike Bowman, and real firefighters, I wish to thank you all for helping me bring a sense of dignity and realism to the character in our larger-than-life emergency landscape. Your kind and complimentary words have meant the world to me.

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the job so that others can see another day. His story arc honors them. We at 9-1-1 salute all the incredible men and women who do these dangerous jobs and strive to keep us safe.

Our show is incredibly difficult to make at times with long hours, challenging stunts and elaborate disasters. We couldn't do it without each other.

I wish to thank everyone in every department and all those at ABC, 20th Television and FOX. We are a sprawling team.

I will miss all my 9-1-1 family. Our incredible crew whose professional excellence is second to none. All the writers who keep pulling rabbits out of hats. All the directors tasked with the same. All the incredible guest cast over the years as well as Jennifer Love Hewitt and the cast in the call center.

I will miss my partner, Angela Bassett. Her strength and her sweetness, and us holding hands. We parted ways too soon. Much love.

Tim Minear and Brad Buecker, you've been my pillars and are two of the best in the business. I will miss you both.

Finally, I will miss my beloved and unruly children of the 118. Aisha Hinds, Kenneth Choi, Oliver Stark, Ryan Guzman and Anirudh Pisharody: this is a tough goodbye. Stay unruly, but be professional and get the job done. Misfit heroes need each other. That's how we do it at our firehouse. Pass it along to the next new guy.

This has been one wild adventure. I thank you all, with all my heart.

Was Bobby's death a creative decision, or worked in because Peter Krause wanted to leave the show?

Tim Minear: It was entirely creative. A very difficult creative decision, because there's practically no one I love on this Earth more than Peter.

So what brought you to that choice? Because for years watching "9-1-1," it's been pretty safe to assume they'll always survive and always find a way.

You just answered your own question. I still think people grip their seats and are excited when Athena lands a plane on the freeway or a ship capsizes — but after eight years, it just felt like, if we have any hope of creating stories going forward that have actual stakes, then someone's got to die.

And it's got to be Bobby?

Well, I think it needed to be Bobby for a lot of reasons. The first reason is that it made sense. It didn't feel arbitrary, because if you track the tragic arc of his character, of where he started, and how he came to LA looking for atonement, it just makes a kind of tragic sense for his character in a way it wouldn't for another character. But also, I just didn't want to go small. Not that any of the characters are small, but Bobby's death affects every single character's story in a way that really no other character death would.

I mean, maybe I should have started small. Maybe I should have cast a red shirt and beamed down to the planet and have him get eaten by an alien or something. But no, it's like, if you're going to do it, just do it. I had a lot of success on "Lone Star" with some shocking deaths, but they were never any of the main characters. It was like, if you had a really good father or a beloved mother who wasn't a first responder, you can just kiss their ass goodbye, because I'm gonna kill them.

Did you have conversation with Peter and Angela surrounding how Bobby would die, and what the right way for him to go would be and how you'd portray it on screen?

A lot of conversations, particularly with Peter. I think what he didn't want was to go out like some horror movie zombie. So it was a real question of, how do you thread that needle and play the poignancy of it, without it just turning into body horror? And I think when you see the final episode that's all finished, it was Peter's idea to have Bobby move to that table and get into this prayerful posture, which I thought was just kind of perfect. You're looking at him as an image that you can't get to. So a lot of the staging of that was Peter, along with Dawn Wilkinson, our director of the episode, and then me. But when I got to this lab leak episode, and I realized that

there was a potential there for an epic death for a character, that's when Bobby's number was up. Because I didn't go into breaking the first part of that, going, "This will be Bobby's death episode!" But as the story started to present itself, I realized, "Oh, he's not walking out of here."

How did you decide on the final shot of the episode being medics taking away a zipped up body bag, and then a cut to Bobby's helmet?

We do see the body bag. I just felt, and this was a matter of some controversy, but I felt that I couldn't go out of this episode, particularly since we're not going to be on for a week, with people wondering if he died or not. I didn't want to play his death as some kind of cheap cliffhanger. So I just felt that the cold, clinical image — and it's not just the body bag, it ends up being the security camera view of that body bag. So it's very detached, it's very impersonal. But then I added a final image of just that helmet sitting in the debris, and it just says "118 Captain," and it makes you want to stop breathing. But, yeah, that was my reasoning: I wanted it to be poetry, and then I wanted it to be a little bit of a splash of cold water in your face.

Where does the remainder of the season go from here with three episodes left?

Normally, I wouldn't do a big two-part thriller in Episodes 14 and 15. Now here's a little bit of the sausage-making: they were shot as Episodes 13 and 14, but I knew that there was going to be a break after Episode 15, and what I didn't want to do was make this the season finale, because I felt like you need at least three episodes after. So I shot Episode 15 and aired it as Episode 13. We shot it super fast, so that 14 and 15 could be this two parter, and then I would have three episodes to deal with the aftermath. So it's not like Bobby dies and then everyone goes on with their day. I think you need three episodes for the audience and the characters to get their heads around it. I'm not saying that the last three episodes are a therapy session, much. There's still thrilling adventures and high-stakes first-responder action taking us into our finale, but every single episode of the next three, they're all about Bobby's death.

What was your conversation with Angela like about what this means for her and her character, because she's going to stay and Athena's now going to be carrying all of this moving forward?

I had to call every single cast member. First of all, Peter and I knew about this long before the rest of the cast did. We had been talking about it for like a month leading up to it. And then finally, it was time for me to let the cast in on what was happening. And we tried to be circumspect — you can see how that worked out — like we had different versions of the script out to some of the crew or the day players or the background artists, because we didn't want it to leak. And then, of course, we went out and shot something in broad daylight and that kind of went out the window.

But every single cast member had a slightly different reaction. Like when I called Aisha, for instance, she just didn't believe me. She was like, "No, really, come on. Come on, you're not serious." Kenny, same thing. I mean, nobody could believe it. It wasn't just a quick phone call of, "I'm going to kill off this character," I had to convince them it was real. And Angela was shocked. She was like, "You're gonna kill my husband?!" And I'm like, "And it's gonna create a lot of story for you."

Is the door open for Peter to come back as Ghost Bobby, or in some other form in the future?

Well, I will say that Episode 15 is not Peter Krause's final appearance this season.

This interview has been edited and condensed.