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9-1-1's Angela Bassett Talks Athena's Instincts, Hopes For Bathena & More

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Athena Nash-Grant finds herself in a unique position during [9-1-1 Season 8 Episode 7](#), when she gets injured on the job and soon finds herself mentoring a rookie.

She immediately clashes with young Officer Sparks, and the two spend an eventful day together that ends with a big bust, which has Athena doubting the other officer's ability to do the job correctly.

Eventually, Athena and rookie Sparks part ways, but she's there during a traffic stop and bears witness to him shooting a mother in the front seat of her car after mistakenly grabbing his gun instead of his taser.

It's a whirlwind of an hour for Athena, and in the aftermath of the shooting, Athena decides that she'd like to mentor someone new and give back to the job she's dedicated much of her life to.

Film and television legend Angela Bassett has played the formidable Athena since the series began, and we jumped at the chance to talk with the veteran actress about this storyline and more.

Bassett is not only one of the best actresses of her generation but also incredibly kind. She has a deep appreciation for Athena and [9-1-1](#), the show she's called home for many years now.

Enjoy this one, 9-1-1 fans!

Athena struggles right off the bat with having a partner, which is not something we've ever seen her have. Why do you think Athena's always been so comfortable on her own?

We talked about a partner maybe about three seasons ago, but then that sort of went to the wayside. I think that Athena's instincts are always spot on. She leans into that, and when you have to explain yourself to someone, maybe they slow you down a little bit.

She's always been more comfortable doing her own thing and taking her own lead. Although I think she's collaborative, that's usually with her sergeant.

We've seen her team up with different detectives and such, and she's always great. However, she prefers to be on her own day-to-day.

Yeah, on a case-by-case basis.

Exactly.

Usually, with Romero, on a case-by-case basis.

Yes, exactly.

Athena's instincts were screaming at her about Officer Sparks. It was a very intriguing storyline for Athena, as she had to differentiate between her complicated feelings about her current place on the job after her injury and other factors and her gut feeling about the rookie cop.

Can you talk to me about that storyline and how Athena was able to differentiate between those two things?

Yeah. That's one of the positive aspects of her. She's willing to sit back and give room to the idea that her ego may be overstepping. She's used to being a lone wolf, working alone, trusting herself and somewhat in others... As I said, it is case by case, but I am giving room to the fact that she could be wrong.

Don't tell her she's wrong, but she could be wrong. She can question herself in those quiet moments. I really like that about her.

When those alarm bells do go off, because, as she said, when somebody tells you who they are, believe them, listen to them, and his reasonings for wanting to be a cop during that conversation that they have in the car, that set off alarm bells for her.

Athena got into this line of business more for altruistic reasons. When we think about her origin story, we see that she is a good cop and takes what she does very seriously. I think she knows that more than anything, we don't need anyone out here on the streets with a God complex.

She's pretty aware of that possibility, that there's always room for good and evil within the ranks, so she's got her eyes on him, but she is also getting up there. She's been on the force a very long time, and as nature has it, people slow down.

Her ace is her wisdom and instinct, and she'll play her hand for as long as she can, as long as she's able.

At the end of the episode, I liked that she took a step back and said, "I would like to mentor and help the next generation of young law enforcement officers." If that were to come to fruition, how do you think Athena would adjust to that?

Since it's her idea, I think she'll adjust pretty well. It's her idea. She's on board. She's had the experience of being with someone and seeing that these young kids are enthusiastic. Being that mentor would be a great thing for her.

It would be appropriate for her and something that we would expect from her: that she would pay it forward in that way to the next generation, that she cares about young people.

We've seen her with her kids and others, and just being in this line of business, she takes seriously to protect and to serve.

I think that service part of it, she would do well with in terms of mentorship, finding a mentee that she thinks is worthy of her time, and that would do a lot of public good in the right hands, with those hands and that heart, that mindset.

Yes, for sure.

Even though it was a quick check-in scene, I liked that Athena-and-Hen moment because we haven't gotten that a lot lately, and I love that friendship. What do you

think it means for Athena to have a friend she can talk to about the stresses of the job and anything in her life?

I think it's very important. It's a lot like real life. Our girlfriends are, in large part, the way we get through hard times and process hard moments. I think that's exactly what she's doing. They tell us the truth to our faces, and sometimes she doesn't want to hear it, but who better to come from?

She knows that Hen's a straight shooter, Hen has her back, and she is concerned about her welfare. As they say, bring it, but bring it easy. Tell me the truth, but don't harm my self-esteem in the process.

Yeah. Don't hurt my spirit while you're telling me the truth.

Like, "Can you find a way to massage this news?"

Exactly.

Going back to the beginning of the season, Athena obviously went through a lot with the plane, reopening those wounds about Emmett's murder and meeting back up with Dennis Jenkins.

How do you think that will shape Athena, and how do we know her moving forward now that she's been able to close that door from her past?

I think possibly it really is that closure that she's been wondering would it ever come, wondering when and where it would come from. I think that's what people enjoy about Athena's journey: she's always showing up and showing resilience.

It's been a bit since we have seen anything with Bobby and Athena, so can you speak to anything coming up for them?

There hasn't been any house search in the past couple of months, so I'm wondering about that. I literally was wondering, "Where are we going to live, and what is it going to look like?" because Bobby and Athena have been really busy.

He was reconnecting with the 118 and also doing his part as a tech advisor or trying to take himself from that duty. Athena has been nursing herself back to health, continuing to work, and resisting change.

Resisting change — that's physical change, the idea of physical change, and also change in terms of partnering with someone. I think those different aspects are going to settle down a little bit, and maybe we can get back to this house hunt. They can't live in this corporate housing, which is really depressing.

I was going to say that apartment's a little bit depressing.

It's a lot depressing.

Yeah, they need something. Their personalities are something a bit less corporate like you said.

When they're going to get out of there, who knows?

****This interview has been edited for length and clarity.****

You can watch 9-1-1 on Thursdays at 8/7c on [ABC](#).