

Controversial Love Triangle Resolution Will 'Breathe New Life' Into 'When Calls the Heart,' Exec Producer Says

Have you heard the recent uproar from the Hearties? The loyal but outspoken fans of the Hallmark Channel's top-rated series, *When Calls the Heart*, made social media waves recently in protest of the decision to resolve the ongoing love triangle between Elizabeth Thornton Thatcher (Erin Krakow), Mountie Nathan Grant (Kevin McGarry) and Lucas Bouchard (Chris McNally). Elizabeth's shocking choice of Lucas in the heart-gripping season eight finale left Team Nathan fans beyond upset. But Brian Bird, the family-friendly show's executive producer and co-creator, says this difficult creative choice will yield ultimate benefits for all those who love *When Calls the Heart*.

"Fan polls that are out there indicate that Mountie Nate was the more popular... you know, that was the genesis of *When Calls the Heart*," Bird tells host Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of the *Greenelines* podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network. "In Janette Oke's books, it was a teacher and a Mountie; that was always how it was."

And despite the outcry, Bird says, the creative reasons behind the choice will "give us more seasons ... because we have not gone down that road before. We feel this will breathe some new life into the show, keep us telling fresh and robust and vibrant stories.

"I really feel a big responsibility to give the Hearties Hope Valley for as many seasons as possible," Bird, who recently saw the series renewed for a ninth season, says. "And we

believe that decision is going to make that a possibility. So we took the harder path; there's no doubt about that."

Bird has responded with grace to the social media criticism the decision has received, and says, "We know that this decision doesn't sit well with a lot of Hearties. But my request, at least my hope, is that the Hearties will trust us to do the right thing, as we've given them a show full of faith and love for eight seasons. And that's not changing; that's still the mandate for us. And we believe there's lots of story left to tell."

For much more from Brian Bird of *When Calls the Heart* about season 9, some new projects he's involved with and even a tease about a potential return of Abigail Stanton (embattled actress Lori Loughlin) to the show, listen to this entire episode of *Greenelines* here. Be sure to subscribe to the *Greenelines* podcast on your favorite podcast platform for more interesting, inspiring stories like this one. {eo}

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