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very free there," she says. "We would go to bars sometimes. I think about how old I was at that time. How on earth were we able to get into these places?"

VanCamp quickly learned that she would not be satisfied by even the most perfect plies. "I didn't want to do ballet anymore," she says simply, taking a bite of her scrambled eggs. So she took an acting class, and soon landed some work—her first commercial was for a Montreal fast food chain called Metro, and it required her to hold a skating pose while a rig wheeled her around an ice cream cone—and bit parts in Canadian television and films, like the clumsy but earnest lesbian drama *Lost and Delirious* (starring *Mad Men*'s Jessica Pare and *Covert Affairs*' Piper Perabo).

But her first big break came courtesy of TV's teen guru, Kevin Williamson, creator of *Dawson's Creek* and *The Vampire Diaries*. Based solely on her limited reel, Williamson cast her as the little sister in a short-lived mystery called *Glory Days*. "He's responsible for it all," declares VanCamp. "I think he did that with *Katie Holmes*, where he saw her tape and cast her straight from it."

In both actresses, Williamson likely saw a wholesome beauty that wouldn't distract from a character's precociousness. VanCamp is poised—she stands 5'9" in the pair of canvas Toms that she switched into for the hike—and modest, dressed in a soft gray tee and jeans, a far cry from the body-con power dresses her character prefers. She doesn't call attention to herself; the guys sitting at a nearby table swapping stories of *Chloe Grace Moretz* and VanCamp's *Captain America* co-star *Cobie Smulders* didn't even look up as she passed.

After *Glory Days*, VanCamp landed the role of mature teen *Amy Abbott* on *Everwood*, and from there, she joined *Brothers & Sisters* as down-to-earth *Rebecca Harper*, a sweet part that was dwarfed by veterans *Sally Field* and *Rob Lowe*. "I felt like I was stuck in a rut playing the same thing," says VanCamp. "I promised myself after leaving [*Brothers & Sisters*] that I would only do something that made me happy, that excited me, that was different. I wasn't going to compromise my creative integrity just for money, or to stay relevant."

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