

“it should be illegal for people to stalk you with cameras. it’s really invasive. how do you enjoy a moment? i see how people can spiral out of control.”

Though *Revenge* creator Mike Kelley has said that he had VanCamp in mind for the lead from the beginning, the actress says ABC “wanted to see everyone that they could,” and it came down to her and one other girl for the part of the artful vigilante. Finally, it was time for her to audition.

“I think Emily would be one of the first people to tell you coming into this project, she wasn’t the obvious choice,” says Gabriel Mann, who plays her scene-stealing, tech-savvy pal Nolan Ross. “When I first met Emily, the thing that struck me about her is that she is nothing like the character she plays on the show. She is the warmest, most giving, gentle person you have ever met.” Mann and VanCamp immediately bonded over Bon Iver during van rides to the Zuma Beach set in Malibu, and he needs little urging to talk for 20 minutes straight about his co-star, including her cooking and the frequent cast barbecues she hosts at her house. “I love the dichotomy of someone who has one of the biggest hearts playing



the ultimate badass,” he continues via phone before heading to the first table read of Season 3. “Watching her turn from hesitantly vulnerable to throwing cold, hard, I’m-going-to-take-you-down-and-see-you-in-hell looks is an electric experience.”

VanCamp concedes the enormity of her unlikely good luck. “They could’ve hired someone with a bigger name and banked on that,” she admits. “They took a chance on me, and it’s brought on a whole new collection of opportunities.”

It’s thanks to “nut job” Emily Thorne, as VanCamp calls her, that the actress will be raising her profile as Agent 13 in next April’s *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*. Per gig orders from Marvel, no one—not VanCamp, nor directors Joe and Anthony Russo (*Community*, *Arrested Development*)—can discuss details, but her S.H.I.E.L.D. agent, also known as Sharon Carter, is romantically involved at some point with *Captain America* (Chris Evans).

“We wanted someone that Cap would have an immediate interest in,” says Joe Russo. “It had to be a strong-willed person, and we felt that Emily’s work on *Revenge* was a great test tube for what this character could be. She’s obviously very credible with physicality, she holds the screen really well, and she even looks like the character from the books.”

She shot her scenes in L.A. immediately following *Revenge*’s wrap, and then flew to New York City to star in the radically smaller project *The Girl in the Book*, about a struggling twen-

ty something writer coming to terms with a sexually abusive past. “It was intense,” says VanCamp.

It’s a different intensity on the set of *Revenge*, where sustaining injury has become an occupational hazard—VanCamp regularly shows up to Pilates covered in bruises. Early last year she was practically hypothermic after filming the drowning of Fake Amanda Clarke (*Adventureland*’s Margarita Levieva) for seven hours in a tank on the Universal lot. “I just remember thinking, ‘Oh my gosh, they’re really lucky that they have this tough-minded ballerina chick and a Russian gymnast in this water,’” says VanCamp. “I don’t think there’s anyone else in Hollywood who would have put themselves through that.”

Whereas Season 2 was pretty dark, with the return of Amanda’s disturbed mother (Jennifer Jason Leigh) and the death of two major characters, the plan according to VanCamp is to “try to reset the old *Revenge*,” with Emily once again reveling in the destruction of her arch nemesis, Victoria (Madeleine Stowe), the Grayson matriarch who once loved but eventually betrayed her father. Stowe agrees that the series “went a bit off-track” last year with the introduction of a nefarious organization known as The Initiative that turned out to be a smoke-and-mirrors operation, and looks forward to more screen time with her co-star.

“We work differently,” says the seasoned actress, best known for her memorable role in *The Last of the Mohicans*. “I was taught to explore and experiment to find a scene, and

so I fumble around a lot and I have a tendency to drop words. But Emily is utterly prepared. She has a native intelligence. She’s not necessarily seen or studied a lot of films, but there’s something in her that’s a natural-born actress. She has a lot of grit, yet she appears like a ray of sunshine.” Ironically, VanCamp’s attempt to ditch her girl-next-door image has found her literally playing the girl next door, plotting payback from her seaside home across the way from the Grayson manor, and it’s the radiance that Stowe refers to that remains a key part of her appeal.

As we near the end of the hike, a young woman approaches with her friends to ask for a photo. “Excuse me, we’re really big fans of the show,” she says, and VanCamp happily obliges. It’s anyone’s guess how she’ll react to the perversions of fame, and what she’ll do with it. VanCamp toys with the idea of one day making a foray into directing, and had even tried to option a book called *Sweet Release*, but someone beat her to it. She’s also worked with the World Wildlife Fund, trying to raise awareness of the decimated population of elephants and tigers.

“I thought maybe next summer I would do something different, something outside of my job,” she says, driving her car, a luxury SUV hybrid, down a hill toward a parking spot. “I could put some of this exposure that freaks me out a little bit to good use.” And there you have it: VanCamp’s polite middle finger to the system.

Stark by Zimmerman, shirt by Boss, shoes by Moschino/Dianna and Chic, hat by Jilbing, photo assistant Graham Walker, digital model assistant at City, digital fashion assistant Michael Kozak, hair: John Jenkins at Starworks, artist using Photoshop, makeup: John Strickland at Starworks, artist using Lancôme, manicure: Milana Okunova at es nails, shoe at \$50 & Sons, for Angeleno.

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