

# Go for Gold, Audrey Pham

—EXCERPT—

By Camille Pavlenko

## Characters

AUDREY Pham – 30. Olympic ballet skier for Team Canada.

BIRCHWOMAN – 50s. A fixture in the neighbourhood for as long as anyone can remember.

PATRICK Pham – 35. Retired Olympic Gold medalist. AUDREY's brother.

MR Jonathan FARRIS-Underwood – 30s-40s. Originally from Australia, he is currently the head of the Neighbourhood Ladies Society in Kensington.

## Setting

February 1988, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The downtown-adjacent neighbourhood of Kensington.

## Act One

### Scene One

*Calgary, Alberta, Winter 1988*

*“BIRCHWOMAN’S”; a store that is a cross between a hippie paradise and an overstuffed pawn shop.*

*It is dim, yet through the sunlit motes we can make out an assortment of curios and oddities. Every inch of the space is taken up by sellable objects; jewellery, furniture, art, shirts that say: “I’m With Stupid”.*

*Long beaded curtains hang from the ceiling and a hammock is set up above the cash register.*

*There is no sign of life.*

*A knock at the door.*

*Silence.*

*Another knock.*

*Tentatively, AUDREY PHAM, a tall young woman with dark hair, aggressively permed, enters the shop. She wears puffy ski pants, the kind that are also overalls.*

AUDREY.                   ...Hello?

*AUDREY encounters a beaded curtain in front of her.*

*Uhhhh.*

*She awkwardly navigates through it; the beads get caught in aforementioned aggressively permed hair.*

*She untangles herself and takes a scrap of paper out of her pocket.*

*“Audrey Pham, Team Canada. Billet Information and address:”*

*She flips it over.*

*...It just says “BIRCHWOMAN’S”.*

*Under her breath.*

What the hell.

...Hello? Mrs... Birchwoman?

*AUDREY picks up a few of the objects around her.*

*She finds a doll. She animates it.*

“I’m Birchwoman! Welcome to my spooky store!”

Yeah, gosh, it’s like clearly from the first 10 minutes of every horror movie.

“Don’t you feel like any second the camera will slowly pan past an antique that’s super possessed?”

Oh boy. Yeah, you’re right.

“What do you think the possessed object is?”

*AUDREY holds the doll up and they look around from side to side.*

I don’t know. That rocking horse looks pretty suspect though.

“Like if we turned our backs, it would start rocking? But, like blurry and in the background.”

Yeah! Oh my gosh, exactly. So scary.

“What’s that over there, Audrey?”

What? Gasp. Wait, how do you know my name?

“I know a lot about youuu. I think I heard something...”

Oh no, Creepy Doll, me too.

*AUDREY creeps closer to the rocking horse.*

AUDREY. “What’s it saying, Audrey? Do you hear that?”

VOICE. WHAT DO YOU WANT.

*AUDREY screams and flings the doll away from her.*

AUDREY. Oh God! Are you a ghost!? If so, I'm sorry, I really don't have the time to solve any like, unsolved mysteries or avenge your untimely murder or whatever. Please don't haunt me.

I have a brother though, I can take you to him, he's... supple, you can easily possess him. He's retired; it'll be good for him to get a hobby—

VOICE. WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR.

AUDREY. *(Looking around)* N-nothing, I'm—hello? Is someone—

VOICE. We're not open for customers today. And if you're from that Neighbourhood Society, it's appointments only.

AUDREY. I have an appointment! I'm Audrey Pham, the uh—Olympian... I'm supposed to be here.

*From the shadowy recesses of the store, BIRCHWOMAN emerges. She walks to the front door and slams it shut.*

*A lot of BIRCHWOMAN's questions sound like statements.*

*A lot of AUDREY's statements sound like questions.*

BIRCHWOMAN. The Olympian.

AUDREY. Hi.

BIRCHWOMAN. You just walk into people's homes.

AUDREY. I just thought, 'cause it's a store—

BIRCHWOMAN. We're not open.

AUDREY. Oh. Well, it's a Wednesday afternoon, so I guess I just assumed you were open.

BIRCHWOMAN. We're not open for customers.

AUDREY. Uhhh?

BIRCHWOMAN. So. You're the athlete.

AUDREY. That's right. It's nice to meet you.

*AUDREY extends her hand. BIRCHWOMAN dismisses it.*

BIRCHWOMAN. Cold season.

*BIRCHWOMAN coughs wetly.*

When's your thing?

AUDREY. My-? Do you mean... the *Olympics*? My final pass is February 18<sup>th</sup>.

BIRCHWOMAN. Well, you better win again. I'm not changing that sign.

AUDREY. What sign?

*BIRCHWOMAN pokes her head out the front. She makes an exasperated sound.*

BIRCHWOMAN. Oh shit, it's blown down again. Cheap glue.

*Pause.*

You gonna stand there or are you gonna help me.

AUDREY. Oh! Sorry!

*AUDREY gives her a hand and together the two pick up a large banner and moves it inside.*

BIRCHWOMAN. Don't ever buy Vegan glue. I swear to God, it's just pine sap and Karma.

*They straighten out the banner. It reads, in all caps and a bold font, perhaps Papyrus:*

*"MEET OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST, AUDREY PHAN! FREE AUTOGRAPHS\*!"*

*In smaller print, underneath: "\*ONE PER CUSTOMER. LIMITATIONS APPLY."*

AUDREY. Oh... This is...(nodding) This is.

BIRCHWOMAN. We're gonna put it back outside. Come on, let's go.

AUDREY. You know, I don't have a gold medal.

BIRCHWOMAN. Yeah, I figured you didn't carry it on you. That what the "limitations apply" bit is for.

AUDREY. No, I mean I've never won a gold medal.

BIRCHWOMAN. Excuse?

AUDREY. Yet. I'll be competing for one on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

BIRCHWOMAN. The 18<sup>th</sup>.

AUDREY. Maybe.

BIRCHWOMAN. *Maybe.*

AUDREY. I have to... well, we all have to qualify first.

*BIRCHWOMAN'S eyes narrow.*

At the... qualifiers?

BIRCHWOMAN. Okay. I'll just cross out "Olympic gold medalist" and write "Olympic Qualifier. Maybe". Sure. That's the same.

*BIRCHWOMAN digs a felt marker out of a nearby pencil cup and crosses to the sign.*

AUDREY. ...and my last name's Pham.

BIRCHWOMAN. Yeah, Phan, I got that.

AUDREY. No, Pham.

BIRCHWOMAN. Phan.

AUDREY. Pham. With a "mmmm".

BIRCHWOMAN. "Nnnnnnn"

AUDREY. Mmmmm.

*This continues.*

AUDREY. "M"! Pham with an "m".

*AUDREY hands BIRCHWOMAN her registration slip as proof.*

BIRCHWOMAN. Well, what the hell am I supposed to do with all this "Phan Club" merchandise, Audrey "Pham".

*She sorts roughly through a box.*

I got 300 coffee mugs that say "Number One **Phan**", "**Phandemonium**".  
And this,

*She pulls out a folded fan and snaps it open. On one side it reads:*

“My Uncle went to the Calgary ’88 Winter Olympics and all he got me was this stupid—

*Flips to the other side.*

**Phan!”**

Tell me who’s gonna buy a sweatshirt that says: “**Phantom of the Opera**”.

AUDREY. Um. People who like Andrew Lloyd Webber?

BIRCHWOMAN. Please. He peaked with *Starlight Express*.

AUDREY. ...It it makes you feel any better, if my name was “Phan”, it’d be pronounced like “Fawn”.

*(Cheerfully)* So you’d still have a box full of garbage.

*BIRCHWOMAN snatches the banner away from AUDREY and folds it up again.*

AUDREY. Yeah, maybe you can just... put it all away for now.

*AUDREY picks up the box of merchandise.*

BIRCHWOMAN. Hey! Watch that!

*BIRCHWOMAN fumbles with the folding of the banner, trying to hurry it and prevent AUDREY from toppling anything.*

AUDREY. Just, store it over...on top of... umm...

*AUDREY attempts to squeeze the box into, under, and on top of, various spots in the crowded shop. She is utterly unsuccessful. BIRCHWOMAN is right behind her attempting to right anything AUDREY has displaced. AUDREY puts the box on the ground.*

Okay. Maybe you could use it as a little table?

*AUDREY, demonstrating, sits next to it.*

This is kinda... quirky, right?

*BIRCHWOMAN stares her down.*

Quirky little store like this...has a...quirky little table for... quirky little tea parties?

*The doll from earlier in the scene is nearby. AUDREY places it on the box and animates it again.*

“Ohhh inviting me to your tea party, Audrey? Hahaha! Too bad the other guest at your party is muuurderrrr!”

*AUDREY mimes the doll attacking her. This bit does not go over with BIRCHWOMAN.*

Kinda...quirk—

BIRCHWOMAN. Stop that. I’m trying to sell that.

*AUDREY stops, but still animates the doll trying to attack her through BIRCHWOMAN’S following lines.*

BIRCHWOMAN. Your room’s gonna be upstairs. It’s small but it’s homey; like a coffin. You’ll be staying here at the store, instead of my place, ‘cause this is a lot more central. There’s a hot plate and a space heater up there but the top two shelves of the mini fridge will freeze anything you put on them. Garbage day is Wednesday and I compost out of spite for the cats in the alley. The skunks were here first and they earned it.

*BIRCHWOMAN rummages through a drawer. AUDREY mimes snapping the doll’s neck before BIRCHWOMAN comes over. She shows AUDREY a ring of rusty old keys.*

This key’s for the door around back. And this one’s for the top of the stairs. Grab your stuff and we’ll settle you in.

AUDREY. *(Offstage)* Thanks again for offering up your place! It’s exciting, hey? I know they had a lot of people apply to be one of the Homestay Billets. Are you a big sports fan?

BIRCHWOMAN. Not me. I’m in it for the Government Cheese.

*AUDREY enters with a duffle bag and her skis.*

AUDREY. Oh.

BIRCHWOMAN. I mean, sure I got a *house* house, but it’s a whole lot easier for you to stay here.

AUDREY. Right. More central, you said. I don’t really know Calgary very well yet. So, we’re closer to the ski hill here?

BIRCHWOMAN. Nah. It's so I can keep an eye on you. Make sure you don't run away with that billet cheque.

AUDREY. Uhhh. Not a problem. I volunteered for it.

BIRCHWOMAN. What, you're not getting a cut of that sweet Olympic Committee moola for staying here?

AUDREY. No—

BIRCHWOMAN. Those tasty Mulroneys bucks?

AUDREY. Uh uh.

BIRCHWOMAN. That spicy Don Getty money spaghetti?

AUDREY. No.

BIRCHWOMAN. No cash salad with a side of low-fat Ralph Klein dressing?

AUDREY. *(Frustrated)* Nope, not a single food-parliament metaphor.

I felt bad when I heard there weren't enough rooms for all the athletes. So, I thought I'd do the good host-country thing and give up my bed.

*AUDREY smiles broadly.*

It kinda sucks to not stay at the Athlete's Village...

BIRCHWOMAN. I read in the paper they got a movie theatre up there.

AUDREY. Really?

BIRCHWOMAN. And a video arcade.

AUDREY. Oh. That's... nice.

BIRCHWOMAN. Disco, international cafeteria, plus a 24 hour spa on site.

AUDREY. Seriously!?! No, Audrey, it was the neighborly thing to do. And that's what the Olympics are all about.

BIRCHWOMAN. Screw that, I'm all about free massages. You know, Deep Tissue.

AUDREY. Because what are we, other than neighbours—

BIRCHWOMAN. Hot stone!

AUDREY. On this big ball of ocean and land—

BIRCHWOMAN. Swedish relaxation!

AUDREY. Mountain and stream

BIRCHWOMAN. Shih Tzu—

AUDREY. Yes. Ok. Yes, it sucks not to be there with everyone else. But I am excited to live right in the heart of Calgary! Explore it! See that little tower you guys got. Go to the Stampede! I've never ridden a horse before. "Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth"? Sold.

BIRCHWOMAN. You know that's not year-round right?

AUDREY. *(No)* Yes. Can you—imagine? Just a really fun fair and animals, and snowcones like, all the time? That sounds terrible.

BIRCHWOMAN. *(100% sincerely)* I would hang myself.

*AUDREY's eyes bulge.*

AUDREY. Giddy up.

*Pause.*

I've never been to Alberta before at all, actually.

I flew over Montana once.

I'm from Vancouver, so I go to Whistler a lot.

Uhhhh...

*AUDREY feels the awkwardness for both of them.*

BIRCHWOMAN. No, please tell me about more places you've nominally visited. What airports have you been to.

*AUDREY puts her skis down in a corner.*

No, not there! You'll make it look crowded. Just put them over there, by that pile of junk.

AUDREY. Which one?

BIRCHWOMAN.        There! The only pile.

*BIRCHWOMAN gestures to the other side of AUDREY.*

AUDREY.              That's my parka.

*AUDREY grabs her parka and juggles it with her skis.*

**—End of Excerpt—**

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