

Movie Draft: *Second Thought*

by Jameson Simmons

(*Second Thought* is one of five made-up films generated during PoopReading.com's recent [Movie Draft](#).)

What lengths would you go to in order to fulfill a loved one's dying wish? Would you compromise your principles – maybe break the law? Most of us would do just about anything; we'd move mountains if we had to. In the Reynolds family, they go even further than that: they move their father's final resting place.

The heartwarming new comedy *Second Thought* explores the subject of mortality in a poignant and affirming light, as brothers Kenny (Woody Harrelson) and David (Matt Damon) come together to comfort their mother through the final months of a disease that is mercifully never specified, but nonetheless terminal. Their mom, Nellie, is played by Dame Helen Mirren with a saucy vitality she hasn't exhibited since *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover*. She's a plucky old battleaxe with a quiver of snide *bons mots* who misses no opportunity to give it to her boys but good – especially Kenny, who left town when his dad died a decade ago and barely visited since.

Also left behind in Kenny's exodus was his daughter Pacey (Anna Kendrick), who's closer to Nellie than anyone (and that's saying something, considering the mama's boy David turned out to be). So, it's an awkward homecoming for Kenny to be sure – and after the initial squabbles (and the requisite tussle on the front lawn for the brothers), everyone settles down to be there for Nellie, and that's when she drops the news: she wants to be buried with their dad. Trouble is, Dad's ashes are interred with his family across town, and there's no room for Nellie there. They'll have to move him, and with no time to spare, the only way to do it is to grab him themselves.

And so begins the funniest caper movie wedged into the middle of a family tearjerker you're ever likely to see. Pacey has a line on an old beater from the used car lot where she answers phones, and she volunteers as wheel man, making Kenny the muscle and David the brains of the operation. Of course there's a downpour on the night of the mission, making digging a disaster and turning cremains into chowder. ("Don't worry," shouts Kenny, evincing quick thinking but little tact, "we can bake him when we get home!") Watching the three graverobbers, forced together by necessity and still learning to trust each other, is a true comic delight. There's slapstick, of course – oh, is there slapstick – but the sequence works on so many levels above that, too.

Harrelson played a dummy with a heart of gold for eight seasons of "Cheers" and he delivers superbly as Kenny: you can't stay mad at him, no matter how many mistakes he's made. Damon takes a welcome step outside his action-hero persona to play more of a straight man role, and proves he's

got the chops to fill out a long career in similar fashion after the bullets stop flying. Kendrick is somewhat underused – aside from the graverobbing sequence, most of her time onscreen is spent casting misty-eyed glances at Nellie, in a move that seems calculated to evoke more emotion from scenes that are already plenty emotional. But really every scene is stolen by Mirren, who can have you laughing in one moment and crying in the next with just a twitch of her eyebrow. The knowing looks she throws at her boys say all there is to say – when a wry smile curls up one corner of her mouth, you can read years' worth of history between them. Then she'll pause to blink away the next thought, and the whole mood of the room shifts without her saying a word. Mirren crafts the kind of character that you can't help falling in love with – and it's a good thing, because she's the kind of lady you'd want to move a hundred bodies for.

Second Thought is rated PG-13 for language that would land Samuel L. Jackson an NC-17, but somehow Helen Mirren gets away with.
