



## Second Thoughts: Second Chances

**Dolores Chernoski Moses**

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*In the musing novel *Second Thoughts*, a woman in a family whose bonds built over time pursues personal awakening.*

In Dolores Chernoski Moses's novel *Second Thoughts*, people take the time and space that they need to make big life decisions.

Paul is an artist who is questioning his decision to move back to New York; he left a lucrative job in California to do so, but his charismatic father, Mitchell, can no longer live alone. His uncle, Viktor, suggested the switch; he and his adopted daughter, Corinne, live together in quiet camaraderie, he writing and gardening while she plays piano and works in the library. She is engaged to her college sweetheart, Syd, an investment banker.

Corrine proves to be her family's linchpin; her decisions have drastic implications for all. Dueling visions of the American dream are dramatized via the men's contrasting viewpoints and Corinne's developing perspective. Mitchell followed a trajectory typical of his age and status as a World War II veteran; his health crisis leaves him questioning those decisions, especially since he isn't close to his son. Viktor is less imposing; his successes, rather than being career-based, were measured by his bonds with his wife and daughter. Paul and Syd take parallel paths in their own generations, with Syd beholden to professional success, and Paul gravitating toward love as an anchor.

Each character receives equal attention in this indulgently paced story. Reprisals of the past—particularly the men's pasts—stall its momentum, though interest revives as Corrine's importance to the story increases, and as the discreet but descriptive prose becomes more attentive to people's emotions and surroundings. The descriptions of Corrine's music are elliptical and lyrical, while drifting conversations result in an impressionistic, spacious atmosphere. Mitchell and Viktor's intimate discussions about their regrets are involving.

References to September 11, 2001, and the 2008 financial crisis tie the cast's stories into national narratives, while the book's descriptions of home bring it back to a domestic sphere. Viktor, Mitchell, Paul, and Corinne end up working together on a town history project and become involved in local restorations; these developments are used to contrast New York glamour with simple living. The introspective conclusion includes an epiphany about home and connectedness that is gratifying and self-aware.

In the musing novel *Second Thoughts*, a woman in a family whose bonds built over time pursues personal awakening.

MARI CARLSON (January 5, 2022)

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