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## The Winchester

by Richard Lewis

I have everything I ever wanted, thought Samuel, as he tended his beloved rose garden.

At 83 he was remarkably fit, considering his significant waistline and all the cigar and pipe smoking he'd enjoyed over the years. The garden had always been a place of peace and contentment, where he could lose himself. Gardening was like a second religion to Samuel, a staunch Methodist, who read from the family bible at the breakfast table every morning.

He'd had three wives, four children and ten grandchildren and there was nothing more he wanted to do, except meet his chums for the occasional round of golf, attend church on Sundays and minister to his garden.

One summer morning, Samuel was on parade inspecting the troops, his regiment of roses standing smartly to attention, guarding the immaculate lawn in their brightly coloured uniforms. One poor recruit in the ranks was letting the side down and as Samuel marched into the garage to arm himself with secateurs to rectify the matter, something caught his eye. There, crouching in the corner, was the rusty old Winchester. He'd not thought about it for years but now he wanted to hold it again.

They say the Winchester was the rifle that won the west.

It had belonged to his uncle Wilmer who'd been trampled to death in a stampede, in the wilds of Canada, back in the 1920's. Samuel had been dispatched as a nineteen-year-old to manage the ranch, even though he knew nothing about farming.

The Winchester, willingly triggered memories of those days on the range. It all came flooding back.

How he'd met his first wife Jess in Calgary and how she'd tragically died two days after giving birth to their son. He couldn't bear to leave her, laid away in the dark soil but though he'd tried to look after the motherless child, he eventually had to return to Wales so his sisters could make a better job of it.

Samuel, not one to dwell on things, probably never really grieved. His instinct was to move on. Two years after losing Jess he Married Florrie, who gave him three daughters. They lived happily together for fifty years. Six months after Florrie died he married a family friend, Marg.

He'd outlived them all, and now, rifle in hand, feelings welled up like the rising tide and the loss threatened to overwhelm him. Unexpectedly, he was exhausted. Like the Winchester, he felt very old and neglected and wondered how much time he had left. He longed to be with Florrie again, though wondered how the three wives would get on in that heavenly garden that awaited him.



