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*Looking at my Friend*

*Irene's story*

I met May Nicholson for the first time at a conference in a remote and beautiful corner of Argyll. At that time May was working with Glasgow City Mission and she had brought some of the ladies who went to the Mission's Family Centre in Govan up to the weekend conference. I was the speaker, and just before I was to give my talk, May came, put her hands on my shoulders, and prayed for God's blessing. God answered that prayer and one of the ladies whom May had brought with her came to saving faith in Jesus.





*More Miracles From Mayhem*

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Although I was the speaker, May did a lot of talking. She's never short of words. By the time we parted I had come to love her, and over the months and years that have passed since then, our love has grown and deepened. May's regular goodbye on the phone is 'I love you millions' and I love her millions too. I've watched with great interest as the Lord led May to start Preshal and as it has grown and been blessed.



A visit to Preshal is precious, and so it should be, as the word Preshal comes from the Gaelic for precious. For one thing, a blanket of love surrounds you as you go in. My first visits were made when I was writing *Miracles from Mayhem*, the story of May's life. If I thought the warm welcome was because I was writing May's book, I was very mistaken. Preshal's welcome is for everyone who comes through the door, and I'm not alone in enjoying the warm blanket of love.

Another thing that surprises people when I take them to Preshal (and I've taken a number of friends to visit) is that you can't tell who are members of staff and who are local men and women in need of the support Preshal offers. Of course, part of that is that the one feeds into the other. Those who come to Preshal needing help sometimes go on to be volunteers and then members of staff. That's one of the beauties of the place. A third thing that I love



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is the easy way in which conversations move from ordinary day-to-day things to the Lord. There's no embarrassment about speaking of Jesus; there's no awkwardness when two people sitting at a table doing craft work stop and pray together about a problem they've been sharing. Recently I took a friend to visit Preshal. We walked to the door with May and Mary Doll (you'll read her moving story in the book). In the busy entrance hall the four of us stopped and Mary Doll prayed God's blessing on my friend and me as we left. People were coming in and out past us and nobody thought it odd that four of us should be standing there praying.



May came through the rocky road of alcoholism, drug abuse and many of the things that go with them, but God has used her awful experiences to His glory. She has also gone through cancer. Just after she was diagnosed, I picked May up from a hospital appointment. As she got into the car, she turned to me and said, 'Well, God has used me being an alcoholic to let me reach out to alcoholics. Now he'll use me having cancer to help me reach out to people with cancer.'

At the end of *Miracles from Mayhem* May was going through treatment for her cancer. Some years have passed and she's now in good health and praising God for it. But over the time of May's treatment the work at Preshal went on without her.



*More Miracles From Mayhem*

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Another thing I love about it is that Preshal, while it was started by May, is not her baby. She's not jealous of what other people do; rather she helps people grow their gifts in order that she can do other things. It's only because her team of workers are given freedom to use and develop their skills in Preshal that she can travel all over the place talking about the work. And when she does that, she often takes people with her who came to Preshal with burdens wearing them down, and who now can give testimony to God's ability to save from the deepest of dark pits.



*Miracles from Mayhem* was May's story. This is not. *More Miracles from Mayhem* is about people who have come through Preshal's door, either needing help or as helpers. As in Preshal, so in the book; it's hard to tell which is which, for those who come to help are helped, and those who come needing support end up supporting other people.

