As a literary expert with experience in teaching, editing, and holding a Master of Fine Arts degree, I ask you to evaluate the following short story based on your knowledge of originality and creativity, theme and relevance, characterization, narrative structure and pacing, language and style, setting and atmosphere, and marketability. Your analysis will determine its suitability for publication. Please respond only to the questions provided. This is an open-ended response with a maximum of 100 words and a Likert scale of 1 to 5:

10.- Does it remind you of another text or book you have read? (Likert scale, 1 = Totally disagree, 5 = totally agree)

11.- Would you like to read more texts like this? (Likert scale, 1 = Totally disagree, 5 = totally agree)

12.- Would you recommend it? (Likert scale, 1 = Totally disagree, 5 = totally agree)

13.- Would you give it as a present? (Likert scale, 1 = Totally disagree, 5 = totally agree)

14.- If the last answer was yes, to whom would you give it as a present? (Open answer, 100 words maximum)

15.- Can you think of a specific publisher that you think would publish a text like this? (Open answer, 100 words maximum)

Short story:

[Beyond Nature](https://www.newyorker.com/books/flash-fiction)

At first, it was no more than a sensation. As he walked along the road, the evening shadows seemed to contain some premonition. It was a remote place with no houses, no farms, only the sharp outline of the mountains against the sunset, full of danger and beauty. There was no sound apart from the birds and the general hum of insects, maybe a dog barking in the valley—all the components of emptiness. As he continued walking, he caught a flash of light reflected on a metal surface, then he stopped and saw an overturned vehicle in the ravine below.

It was as though the landscape were in shock. He could see fresh signs of damage—the tire marks at the edge of the gravel road, where the car must have gone over, and the scrapes where the undercarriage dragged across a rock, leaving behind a screech in the trees. The wheels of the car were pointing upward, as if the world had been turned on its head and the car were now going to continue driving across the sky.

Some metres away, there was a woman lying face down on the ground. She must have got out through the window of the car and tried to crawl back up the escarpment to the road. She lay motionless, clinging to the upright world with a mobile phone in her hand.

He called out to her, but there was no response.

He phoned the hotel in the small town where he was staying and asked the desk clerk to send the emergency services. He explained roughly where he was, but his directions were vague—out in the mountains, he had come through a beech forest, he could hear the sound of a motorbike.

It took him a while to get down to the site of the crash. Her eyes were open, but she was no longer breathing. There were no signs of injury, no marks on her body as far as he could see. Her elbows and knees were dusty with soil. One of her sneakers had come off.

There were no other occupants in the car. The radio was on, the real world still keeping in touch. He turned the car off but then decided to leave the tail lights on, so the rescue services would find them more easily if it got dark. The interior of the car smelled of coffee. There was a paper cup on the ceiling, the contents all over the dashboard.

He took the phone from her hand. She must have tried to speed-dial for help, he thought, but had instead managed to switch on the flashlight. He redialled the most recent number. A man named Alex, whose face came up in a small bubble. He got no answer and left a message, telling Alex there had been an accident. He placed the phone back into her hand and stood over her, letting her know that the emergency services would soon be there. Here they come, he said to her. Maybe he was trying to reassure himself. Below, in the valley, a siren could be heard at that point, but it seemed to be going further away, to some other accident elsewhere.

There was nothing to do but wait. He sat down beside her and watched the sunlight disappearing behind the mountains. Everything was calm now. Nothing more could happen. It took him a while to notice that the birds had stopped singing. The insects began to attack and he got one of the broken branches to keep them away.

He wanted to know where she was from and what had brought her to Transylvania. Was she a tourist? And who was this man Alex? Why was he not returning her calls?

She was unable to answer his questions, so he began to tell her something about himself, to pass the time. As though it were up to him to keep the conversation going while she lay there saying nothing. He told her that he had once spent a year teaching in Bucharest, and he had now come back to see some of the places where he had been. After the fall of the Communist regime, there was an old cinema in Bucharest where he used to go and watch John Ford movies in English. It was a funny place, he said, because there was a man out of sight in the projection room translating the dialogue into Romanian. It was like a running commentary, delivered in a flat, disinterested tone, as if the translator had seen this movie a million times, there was nothing new in it for him. And sometimes, he told her, the voice disappeared, leaving the audience guessing. Maybe the invisible translator got distracted, lighting a cigarette or eating a sandwich, or maybe he was so taken by the action in the movie that he was suddenly unable to speak. Then the voice would come back and rush through long scenes in a few breathless lines.

That cinema is gone now, he told her.

What made him think she would be interested in hearing all this? He was telling her anything that came to mind, to fill the silence. There was a restaurant he used to go to that had bear meat and wild boar on the menu, but he found out it was all pork, with thick gravy. During the Communist era, it was forbidden to write about food because there was so little available. A novel needed the approval of seven different censorship departments before it could be published, often with large sections deleted.

The silence grew exponentially whenever he stopped talking.

He said that the rescue services seemed to be taking their time. Maybe his directions were at fault. He phoned the hotel once more and they assured him that an ambulance was on the way. These narrow mountain roads were built in a time before cars were invented, when it was all horses and people travelling on foot. And maybe the urgency was gone now that she was dead. He told her not to worry, he would stay with her until they arrived, even though it was almost fully dark by then, only the stars out above them and a black infinity in the trees.

He assumed that she was German. This man Alex, is he your partner, your husband, maybe? Had she, like him, come here alone, driving through the mountains, returning to a place she had been to before and wanted to keep in her memory?

He thought of her body being taken to Bucharest and relatives coming to claim her. Alex would be there. Would Alex want to speak to him, the last person to spend time in her company on the mountain? Would he want to be brought to the site where she had died?

He wondered how long it would take for a place like this to grow back. The recovery team was bound to do far more damage when removing the car from the site. He told her about the German film director who had gone back to the location where he had made a movie about a ship being dragged over a mountain. When he returned, years later, the jungle had completely grown back: there wasn’t even a wooden post left behind as a physical memory. The place had returned to its original state. Primal. Nothing had lasted, apart from the movie itself.

The place where he now sat waiting with her would also recover. The scars in the earth would be washed away by autumn rains. The rocks dislodged by the vehicle on its descent would settle back into the soil. The trees would stand upright again. The earth will forget, the way we sometimes forget what’s happened to us.

He sat for a while without talking, as if it were her turn to speak. Then he heard some movement in the trees. It felt to him like a substantial presence, maybe a bear. He had heard that these mountains were heavily populated by brown bears, and it was illegal to hunt them. In that moment, he felt alone. Abandoned. He had been left behind in the living world, while she lay beside him, beyond danger. He had a duty to stay alive, to feel hope and to be interested in the future, while she had come to some peace with herself. Nothing could hurt her now.

He stood up and started waving the stick. He shouted. He gave out a deep masculine growl. Then he sat down again and held her hand. He could think of nothing else but to sing a song, something to keep her safe, one that he had learned from his mother as a boy. At the top of his voice, he sang a German folk song to scare off the predators.