Lake Malawi's lost resort

It was that dangerous twilight time, when the roads are swarming with villagers, children, runaway piglets and wayward goats all dashing to get home before nightfall. (0) _I___. Road accidents are frequent in this dusky light. It became obvious that we'd have to stop somewhere overnight. We tried a couple of lodges, but they were closed, or had no vacancies, or just didn't like the look of us. (19) ____. We were beginning to get worried. Suddenly, out of the dusk, a crooked, hand-painted sign flickered across our headlights: "Maia Beach Cafe Accommodation." After a kilometre or so, the track we'd taken divided into a number of less distinct tracks. (20) ____. One was signposted towards the beach and we took it. There was no light ahead apart from the stars, which hung so bright you almost felt you could reach up and pick them out of the sky like low-hanging fruit. Suddenly, our wheels hit a patch of soft sand and sank in. The tyres were spinning, but not gripping. We were stuck. (21) ____. Three wheels were hopelessly churning up the sand; the fourth was spinning free with a four-foot drop beneath. If we slipped down there, we would never get the car out again. What happens in a situation like this, I wondered, in pitch dark, without a farmer with a tractor to call on? We held our breath and listened to the silence. There must be a village – but where? Then we heard voices, coming from somewhere beyond the bushes. (22) ____. They greeted us, smiling. We asked for directions to the Maia Beach resort. It had closed down, they said. But someone in a nearby village had a key. We left the car and followed them down a series of dark winding tracks, without knowing who they were or where they were taking us. (23) ____. Seeing a man emerge from one of the houses we had reached I was relieved. "You are welcome to stay at the Maia Beach accommodation", he smiled, apparently unsurprised by the pale strangers on his doorstep in the middle of the night. He fetched the keys, and we followed him down a winding track through the bushes. After a while, the bushes thinned out and I could see a cluster of small bamboo huts. This beach resort, we were told, had been created by a couple from Birmingham who intended to fund a school and a health centre in the village with the profit from the resort. But few tourists had ever made it here. There was the wooden skeleton of a restaurant and a scattering of decrepit huts, gradually returning to nature. The Birmingham couple had not been back for a while. (24) ____. Our rescuer smiled and shrugged, and vanished into the night. After he'd gone, we stitched up the biggest holes in the mosquito nets, and fell into a deep sleep.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

A The three of them and the boyfriend all got behind the car and started to shove.

B We were directed to other, more remote places, which either didn't exist, or were also full.

C No one knew whether they would ever come again.

D They were definitely not well-trodden – they were hardly more than faint trails. E We were woken by bright sunlight, needling through the cracks in the bamboo wall, and the sound of their voices.

F Getting out to assess the situation, we saw it was even worse than we had imagined.

G As they drew closer, two boys appeared, followed by an older man.

H I felt alternating waves of fear and comfort, for I realised that if they wanted to rob or kidnap us, they could have done so already.

I For twilight is short in Malawi, and when night comes, the darkness is absolute

LIVEWORKSHEETS