

The Last Place God Made

Based on a draft screenplay, an adaptation of the novel by Jack Higgins

1) Neil Mallory, a young English man in his mid-twenties, is flying a small plane over mountains near the upper stretches of the Amazon in Brazil. The plane is a dilapidated Vega, flying a mail run. A violent rainstorm buffets the plane and the engine stalls, leaking oil. As Mallory realises that he may have to ditch, he hears an American voice on his radio, offering assistance. Another plane, a 1936 Norseman monoplane, is following him. The American voice (Hanna) instructs Mallory to follow and leads him to a clearing on the bank of the river. Narrowly avoiding the jungle at the edge of it, Mallory makes a landing in which he loses the undercarriage. The other plane makes a perfect landing nearby.

2) Its pilot is Sam Hanna, an ex-World War I pilot in his middle forties. From a hip flask he revives Mallory, who has been knocked unconscious. Collecting the mail pouch, the log book and Mallory's bag, Hanna hurries the younger man into the Norseman and makes an expert but dangerous takeoff over the trees.

3) In the plane, the two men introduce themselves. In the jungle below a native reacts to the sound of the plane, then menaces it with a spear. Hanna comments, "Those guys will skin you alive if you're dumb enough to get caught." As they continue, making for Santa Helena, Mallory falls asleep. Hanna studies him, muttering to himself, "The answer to a mother's prayer."

4) They land on a clearing at the river's edge on the opposite bank to an isolated mission building. They climb into a small launch beside the jetty and are ferried across. Hanna delivers his mail pouch to Father Conte, the priest in charge of the mission. Passing Mallory over to the nuns so that they can treat his minor injuries, the priest wants to be sure that Mallory has been inoculated for smallpox.

Sister Ana and Sister Joe take care of Mallory in the mission infirmary. They tell him that the smallpox epidemic is very bad and the Indians are unwilling to come for inoculation.

Later, as they prepare to take off again, Mallory and Hanna discuss Father Conte. Hanna has been warning him of the danger of attack from the Huna Indian tribe, but the priest, reminding them that it was the white man who brought the disease, insists that the missionaries must stay. He promises Hanna to be in touch by radio if there is a crisis. Hanna will be back next week.

5) In the plane again, Hanna explains to Mallory that they are making for Manaus, once a major city, now the “sin city of the Amazon.” We learn that Mallory is originally from Oxford.

6) Joanna Martin, an attractive and smartly dressed American woman in her late twenties, disembarks from a river steamer at Manaus. She orders a cab to take her to the Palace Hotel. On the way, she passes a river front landing. A nun, Sister Teresa, is trying unsuccessfully to hire a boat to take her up river. Frustrated and angry, she declares that she will have to approach the local military, Colonel Alberto, for help.

7) Also on the way to the Palace Hotel are Hanna and Mallory. Hanna is describing the history of Manaus, which was built by rubber millionaires.

At the hotel, Hanna is well known. A German gentleman named Von Peeps disappears as Hanna arrives. Yuca, an old half-breed Indian manager, greets Hanna. He promises to look after “Captain” Hanna’s new friend Mallory.

Hanna and Mallory both react to the appearance of Joanna Martin, who is delivering an envelope to Yuca. They are accosted by another American pilot, Tom Johnson, but Hanna declines his invitation, explaining that Mallory needs rest.

8) In another room of the hotel, Von Peeps and Roberto, a young Brazilian, are operating an elaborate wireless set. (The scene is played in German with subtitles.) We gather that they are worried about the disappearance of a courier called Richter. He may have disappeared with a consignment of diamonds. One of them says that “war is about to be declared.” (This is the first indication of the fact that the period of the movie is 1938.)

9) Alberto, wearing an immaculate uniform, disembarks from a military gunboat arriving at the Manaus waterfront. He instructs his aide Lima that four men should be left on board “to begin repairs at first light.” Tomorrow they will “contact Rio.” Two men in chains are brought onto the deck of the gunboat.

10) Sister Teresa is eating in the dining room of a convent, unhappy at her failure to find means of transport to Santa Helena. She is not sure whether the boatmen are nervous about the danger of smallpox infection or the danger of Indian attack. She plans on appealing to Alberto.

11) Yuca wakens Mallory, who has fallen asleep in his hotel room. Hanna has instructed that Mallory is to join him for dinner.

12) Arriving at the waterfront, Mallory discovers that the rendezvous is a converted river boat steamer, now a club called The Little Boat. He is escorted aboard by Carlos and led to Hanna by a girl in a red satin dress who introduces herself as Angel.

On a private deck, Hanna is sitting with Alberto, whom he introduces. Hanna seems to be well known at this establishment too. In reply to questions from Alberto, Mallory explains that for the last two years he has been flying supplies for a mining company on the Xingu River. Before the accident to his plane he was about to return home and join the Royal Air Force. The three men discuss Brazil's possible involvement in the impending European war. Alberto expresses the opinion that, though the majority of Brazilians might prefer to stay neutral, resident Italians and Germans are eager to assist the Axis powers. Brazil, he explains, is rich in uncut diamonds which are being smuggled out of the country to Europe, where they are sold to finance Germany's war preparations.

As the Colonel leaves them, promising to assist Hanna's friend over the matter of travel documents, Hanna tells Mallory that the Colonel was a "high-up in Rio" but got in some trouble and has been sent to "cool his heels" in Manaus. They return to discussion of the troubles among the Indians. The Hunas, who blame the smallpox on white men, have gone on a "killing spree," creating problems for Alberto's military force. Hanna assists by keeping the Colonel informed of what he sees on his mail run flights, a schedule which is very demanding. Ordering more drinks for Mallory, Hanna hints that there is work for an extra pilot if Mallory is interested. Mallory declines the offer. He means to return to Europe.

13) Later, when Mallory is clearly under the influence, Hanna learns that Mallory is divorced from an American wife. They are joined by Angel and an underage prostitute called Maria. "A present," explains Hanna, "compliments of the best whorehouse in Brazil." Maria, encouraged by the old man, proceeds to seduce Mallory.

As Maria and Mallory leave the establishment, Carlos follows them. Embracing the girl, Mallory is hit on the head from behind and collapses, unconscious. Maria removes his wallet and passport.

14) Mallory recovers consciousness in a jail cell. Alberto, discovering him, is shocked at his condition and takes him to an office in order to get information for a report. The trouble, explains the Colonel, is that if Mallory is handed over to the local police, they are liable to arrest him for being without identification papers or money, and he could be sent to a labour camp.

Hanna arrives in time to intervene. Overriding Alberto's insistence on the legal requirements that the local police be informed, Hanna declares that Mallory cannot be arrested on these charges because Hanna is taking him on as a second pilot in his air mail service company.

15) At Manaus airfield, Hanna shows Mallory another plane which he has recently purchased. It is a Bristol, shabby in appearance, but serviceable. Mallory is instructed to fly the plane northward, along the Rio Negro, to a place called Landro. There he will meet one of Hanna's colleagues, a man called Mannie, "the best one-legged Jewish mechanic this side of the Atlantic." Hanna supplies him with a six-gauge double-barreled shotgun, protection against attack by Indians.

As Mallory takes off, he performs an acrobatic maneuver (the Immelmann Turn) and "buzzes" Hanna, flying close over his head. Hanna is in no way bothered by this.

16) As Mallory flies the Bristol northward, Hanna overtakes him in the Norseman. Communicating over the radio, they exchange cheerful insults as they engage in a mock air battle.

17) At Landro, Hanna introduces Mallory to Mannie, who is Hanna's repair and maintenance man. Hanna also shows Mallory his well-furnished home. Rain has started to fall. The noise seems to upset Hanna, who complains, "It goes on for days sometimes. Drives me crazy."

While Mallory takes a shower, Hanna, becoming irritable over the sound of the continuous rain, starts to drink.

When Mallory reappears, Hanna is gone. Waiting, Mallory inspects photographs on the wall. They show Hanna as a member of the French Air Force ("La Fayette Escadrille, 1917"). Another photograph is of a German group that includes a pilot, Manfred von Stern, and his entourage.

Going in search of his absent host, Mallory discovers Mannie in the hanger, working on the Bristol. They discuss the fighting in World War I, when Hanna and Mannie were pilots on opposite sides. Mannie describes the relationship. "The fighting was ferocious, but the friendships were also strong. They had nothing to do with the fighting."

Commenting on Hanna and his behaviour, Mannie explains that "His life was over on the last day of that war. If God was truly kind, he would have let him die then, when his life was over. Instead, Sam spends his life waiting for death."

18) Figueriedo, owner of the local bar, comes to the house and begs Mallory to accompany him, urging that he bring a weapon. Collecting the shotgun, Mallory follows him to the bar. They look through the window and see Hanna being held by two men as Alvia, a huge Brazilian, pours a jug of wine over his head while a machete is held to Hanna's throat. Other customers in the bar watch.

Figueriedo leads Mallory through a back door into a kitchen adjoining the bar. Entering from the kitchen, Mallory confronts Alvia. Mallory fires the shotgun at the central roof pole so that the roof falls in. In the ensuing chaos, Mallory reloads but is rushed by Alvia. Hanna joins the fight and the two of them overpower Alvia, who escapes. The rest of the men in the bar take flight.

In the aftermath, Mallory and Hanna congratulate each other and Figueriedo brings drinks.

19) Later, still drinking, Hanna tells Mallory how he shot down Mannie during the war, then looked for him in prisoner of war camps, supplied him with a new leg, and arranged to have him returned to Germany. Twenty years later, after teaching in a German university, Mannie went to England where he learned that Hanna was in Brazil and followed him there. As they continue drinking, Hanna returns to his World War I adventures, his "twenty-eight kills when he was twenty-three" and his two-hour fight with "old Richthofen." They sing songs together.

20) Next morning, Mannie wakes Mallory and leads him to a canoe which has been brought downriver by two native labourers. In it are the corpses of two men. "Prospectors from up river, probably." They are victims of Indians and were skinned alive. Mannie tells Mallory that Hanna has left and Mallory should fly the Norseman back to Manaus to fetch Alberto, who has already been notified by radio.

21) Later, when Mallory brings Alberto up from Manaus, Hanna and Alberto inspect more corpses that have been brought in by native labourers in an ox-drawn cart.

They try to contact the mission at Santa Helena, without success.

Mallory, Hanna and Alberto and his aide Lima climb into the Norseman. Hanna and Mallory have hangovers, but Mallory flies the plane.

22) On arrival at Santa Helena they find the place apparently deserted. Then bodies are discovered. A nun shot with an arrow and bludgeoned to death. A man's body hung upside down from a tree by the ankles, his head over the ashes of a fire. Inside the infirmary is the corpse of Sister Joe. Finally they locate the body of Father Conte. He has been crucified to the church door by an Indian lance and his chest is slashed open. "They believe by eating his heart they will take some of his goodness into themselves," explains Alberto.

Counting the dead, they realise that there are two nuns missing. One must be Ana.

The plan is that Mallory and Hanna will fly to Landro. Hanna will pick up the Bristol and come back with it, while Mallory continues to Manaus accompanied by Lima, arranging for a gunboat to start up river. When Hanna suggests that this can be ordered by radio, Alberto insists that it is important not to broadcast the information because it would cause panic. He will send a guide further north to see if the Huna can be contacted.

23) In Manaus, Von Peeps is in conference with some sinister unseen industrialist as Roberto reports to them news of the massacre. They are still worried about Richter and the diamonds.

24) Mallory, arriving at Manaus airfield, instructs Lima that he must leave tonight. He makes his way to the convent at Manaus. Admitted, he is received by the Reverend Mother and discovers that Joanna Martin is already there with Sister Teresa. Mallory explains that he is looking for someone who represents the church authorities in Rio and would like to speak privately. Sister Teresa, introducing Joanna, explains that Miss Martin is here because she is anxious about her younger sister, one of the nuns at Santa Helena. Sister Teresa urges Mallory to speak openly, and after hesitating Mallory tells them of the massacre. Identifying Joanna's sister as Ana, Mallory tells her that was not among the dead. She might have escaped or might still be a prisoner of the Indians. When Sister Teresa demands that Mallory take her along when he flies back to Santa Helena, Mallory tries to refuse and insists that it is against his orders from Alberto. Sister Teresa insists.

25) Next morning, when the reluctant Mallory brings Sister Teresa to the airfield, he finds that Joanna is already on the plane. Both women insist on accompanying him.

26) The gunboat is already at Santa Helena. Hanna, Alberto and Lima are transferring packages to a small launch when the Norseman flies in to make a landing. Hanna discovers the two passengers and protests. "This is no place for goddam women!"

Asked about material that is being transferred to the launch, Hanna tells Mallory that it is in something that Alberto wants dropped on the Indians. When Mallory assumes that they are gifts to placate them, Hanna concurs.

Sister Teresa, Alberto and Joanna inspect the shrouded corpses. Joanna is horrified.

27) While Hanna and Lima finish the loading of the Norseman, the soldiers from the gunboat help Sister Teresa, Alberto and Joanna carry the remains of the victims of the massacre to graves that have been dug. The Norseman takes off and flies over a Huna village in the jungle. On instructions from Hanna, who is at the controls, Lima and Mallory throw the packages out of the plane. To Mallory's horror they explode, shattering the native huts, killing the Indians and starting fires.

Aghast, Mallory attacks Hanna. Lima has to club Mallory with the butt of his revolver, knocking him out, before Hanna recovers control of the plane.

28) Returning to the airstrip, Mallory recovers consciousness and resumes a bitter repudiation of Hanna. "Is that how you won the last war, by murdering poor bloody savages?"

"War is a filthy business," insists Hanna. "The innocent as well as the guilty get killed. But these bastards ain't innocent. You aren't a man, Mallory. A man's got balls. All you got is a head full of idealistic crap."

29) That night, Joanna comes to see Mallory in his cabin. He tells her that he means to leave, flying the Norseman back to Manaus. Joanna tries to make him understand Hanna's behaviour. "You're going back to England to fight a war. Hanna believes he is fighting a war here. His war. The Huna killed his people. He reacted in the only way he knows how – by killing them."

Joanna leaves Mallory and walks to the infirmary, where she discovers Hanna. She is in distress. She asks him if he thinks if her sister might still be alive. Hanna cannot reassure her. She begins to weep. He embraces her and she responds.

Hanna escorts her back to Father Conte's house and leaves her there under the guard of the soldiers.

Hanna and Mallory resume discussion of the ethics of war. "You ain't been through it yet," says Hanna. "Maybe you never will. But when you go back there and someone tries to get you, you won't have time to think about talking to him. Before you open your mouth you'll be dead."

"No one has the right to kill," says Mallory, "the Huna or us. War is different."

"What makes it different?" asks Hanna. "It's still killing. That's what war is about... and this is war."

30) Huillo, the Indian scout, returns. Lima wakes Hanna to tell him that Alberto wants to see him.

Mallory leaves the gunboat and comes to join them in Alberto's tent. The Colonel tells them that his scout has brought a message that the Huna have agreed to a meeting. It is to be at an old abandoned plantation house further up river. Hanna warns that they are likely to be walking into a trap and he wants to go with them. Mallory agrees to participate. Alberto orders the gunboat to prepare for departure.

31) Mallory joins Joanna and tells her of the plans. Hanna reappears and accuses Mallory of making the gesture in order to impress Joanna. Another quarrel.

32) The gunboat starts upriver. Sister Teresa asks Alberto if it is true that Indians do not consider any group containing a woman a threat. Alberto admits that it has been said this is so.

As they reach the place for the meeting with the Indians, Alberto informs Hanna that he will be left in charge of the gunboat, its crew and its passengers, while he and Mallory go meet the Indians. Mallory reluctantly accepts a pistol that Hanna urges him to take along.

Lima reports that Sister Teresa seems to have gone ashore, along with Huillo, the Indian scout.

33) Alberto and Mallory overtake them on a jungle path. Alberto orders Mallory to escort her back to the gunboat. An Indian lance, appearing from nowhere, lands on the path. The guide declares that it indicates that the Indians do not want anybody to turn back.

34) As they reach the ruins of the deserted plantation house, halting in the clearing, some of the Huna elders begin to appear from the surrounding rain forest. Seeing Sister Teresa, they grow excited. The guide interprets. "They think that she is here for revenge."

As they continue forward, Huillo becomes terrified and explains that the Indians are now saying that he betrayed them. Panicking, he starts to run and is hit by a spear and badly wounded.

Alberto uses his machine gun to fire at the earth in front of the advancing Indians. Sister Teresa, thinking that he means to fire on them, tries to intercept. Mallory has to drag her back.

On the gunboat, Hanna has heard the gunfire.

Alberto holds off the Indians as Mallory drags the collapsing Sister Teresa as he tries to make his way back to safety. Huillo creeps after them.

Alberto reaches the bank as Huillo is wounded again by an arrow. Alberto gets onto the boat. Huillo appeals to them not to be left behind as the Indians finally reach him. Alberto seizes a rifle, aims carefully, and shoots Huillo in the head. Alberto is hit by an Indian arrow.

35) Later, Hanna and Joanna attend to Alberto. Offering him a drink from the flask, Hanna pulls the arrow through and uses the liquor to clean the wound. Alberto faints.

36) Hanna offers Mallory his congratulations. Mallory tells Hanna of his decision to leave as soon as he can get away. Hanna asks if he is planning to take Joanna with him. “No,” says Mallory. “Joanna’s sister is still missing.” Hanna seems about to offer advice but decides not to.

37) At Santa Helena, Alberto orders Hanna to take charge of the evacuations. Alberto, incapacitated, is loaded into the Norseman. Sister Teresa and Joanna climb aboard and Mallory takes the controls.

38) As the plane reaches Landro, Mallory sees a launch that has arrived from Manaus. In it is Von Peeps and Roberto. Disembarking, Mallory meets Mannie, who has heard the news that Mallory is leaving. Reminding him that this means ruin for Hanna, Mannie asks Mallory to reconsider while he is in Manaus. They are joined by Von Peeps, who explains that he has been unable to get in touch with his men (presumably the prospectors) and is desperate for news. Mallory responds with a long and angry speech in which he blames the prospectors for bringing the smallpox infection which has caused the deaths of the Indians and provoked their attack on the mission. He includes Sister Teresa in the diatribe because of her faith in a God who could permit such suffering and violence.

When Mallory finds Joanna to get her to re-embark for the rest of the flight to Manaus, she refuses. Mallory can fly his “paper soldier” with the wounded back to Manaus. She will stay until she finds out the fate of her sister.

39) At the Palace Hotel, Mallory goes to the bar and runs into Johnson. As they discuss Hanna, the American pilot tells Mallory of Hanna’s predicament at the time he met Mallory. Hanna’s contract to fly the mail was about to be broken because he couldn’t find another pilot to help him keep the schedule. Mallory’s offer to take the job saved Hanna. Mallory is struck with a thought, and he leaves the bar.

40) Returning to The Little Boat, Mallory finds Angel and bribes her to supply him with the address of the girl who robbed him. Reaching the house where the young prostitute lives, Mallory interrupts her with a client whom he threatens with a gun. The man escapes. The girl, terrified, produces Mallory’s wallet and passport, pleading with him. “He made me do it! He said I was not to spend it.” Mallory, leaving her with the money, takes his passport and departs.

41) At Landro, Sister Teresa and Joanna are trying to persuade Hanna to make another attempt to go up the river in search of the missing nuns. Joanna insists that she is sure Mallory will be returning. Hanna is equally certain that Mallory has gone forever. Hanna leaves. Joanna returns to her room. After taking a shower, she hears voices and, investigating, observes Sister Teresa in conversation with Von Peeps. Introducing him, Sister Teresa explains that he intends to take his launch up the river, trying to make contact with his men.

42) Next day Joanna tries to slip away from Sister Teresa before she wakes, joining the German in the launch, but Sister Teresa reaches them before they can leave. The women and the German take off, up river. As the noise of their departure wakens Mannie, we see the return of the Norseman with Mallory.

43) Mallory shows the passport to Mannie, who agrees they have to confront Hanna. He has gone off drinking again. They discover him in Figueriedo's bar. Alvia is also there, but like Hanna has passed out. Mallory slaps Hanna into consciousness and continues to beat him as he extracts a confession. Mannie steps in and stops the fight.

Returning with Hanna to the hanger, Mallory repeats his determination to leave them and go home, then goes in search of Joanna. He discovers that both Joanna and Sister Teresa have vanished. Hastily arming himself with a machine gun and ammunition, Mallory takes off again in the Norseman, flying north again. Mannie returns to rouse Hanna.

44) As the launch reaches Santa Helena, Von Peeps, Roberto and Sister Teresa disembark, followed by Joanna, who orders Roberta to seize Sister Teresa and bind her to one of the roof support poles on the church veranda. Leaving the older woman, Joanna and the German begin a search of the building. She finds a trail of blood and follows it, discovering a hiding place inside the altar. Inside is a package. Opened, it reveals a large quantity of uncut diamonds. Sister Teresa, helpless, sees the three of them leaving the church. She screams after them but Joanna cautiously tells the men to leave the old woman there.

Roberto finds that the plane will not start. Joanna leaps into the water. The two men follow her.

Indians have begun to attack. Von Peeps is killed by an arrow. Joanna runs for the shelter of the church again, followed by Roberto, who stops to slack the ropes that bind Sister Teresa so that she too can run into the church. The doors are slammed shut.

Robert and Joanna are both armed with machine guns. Joanna, at a window, fires at the Indians in the compound. Roberto fires through the wooden doors at other Indians trying to break it down.

45) Mallory, flying the Norseman, circles overhead, watches the attack. He lands in a nearby clearing.

46) Mannie revives Hanna, who makes for the airstrip.

47) While Joanna, Roberto and Sister Teresa watch from the beleaguered church, the Huna set fire to the Norseman, which explodes. Hanna's engine stalls. In the church, Roberto slips out to reconnoitre. Sister Teresa makes an attempt to follow Roberto, but Joanna threatens her with the machine gun.

Mallory and Roberto fight the Huna with hand grenades and machine guns. Mallory manages to escape ashore and comes upon a canoe that contains the corpse of Joanna's sister Ana.

48) Sister Teresa is wounded by an Indian spear. When Mallory and Roberto reach the church, Joanna opens the door for them. Mallory decides to try and reach the administration building, which is equipped with a radio.

Mallory gets through on the radio to Hanna, who is flying in to rescue them. It's getting dark and Hanna can't land the plane without lights. He suggests that Mallory set fire to the building to provide illumination. Returning to the church, Mallory instructs Joanna and Roberto. He gives them a can of paraffin to start the blaze.

While Roberto is trying to set fire to the administration building, Indians capture and kill him, though he manages to ignite the building.

In the church, Mallory tells Joanna that he saw her sister's body. Joanna is secretly relieved. They await Hanna's arrival. Hearing the Bristol's engine, Mallory slips out into the darkness. Left with Sister Teresa, Joanna fights off more Indians and accidentally sets fire to the building.

Mallory returns to rescue the women from the burning building. Joanna escapes and urges to Mallory to abandon Sister Teresa, but he rushes back for her, picking her up and bringing her out of the flames.

Hanna has landed the Bristol on a sandbank. Joanna and Mallory, who is carrying Sister Teresa, reach the plane. Hanna throws grenades at the Indians. He starts the plane engine, but it cannot carry all four of them. Hanna decides that he must remain. As the plane takes off Indian spears pierce the side of the plane, killing Joanna.

49) At Landro, Mannie provides flares for Mallory to land the Bristol. As they bring Joanna's corpse to the hanger, Mallory discovers the cache of diamonds in her bag.

Mallory, Mannie and the recovering Sister Teresa comment on Joanna's duplicity and Hanna's heroism. Mallory invites Mannie to return to with him to Europe, but he refuses.