

THE FLOWER IN THE WATER Zazil-ha

Transcript of [What'sHerName Episode 65](#)

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[theme music]

Katie: Hi, Olivia

Olivia: Hi, Katie.

KN: Here's my hypothetical for today:

OM: All right.

KN: Would you build a sandcastle, if you knew someone was planning to come by and ruthlessly smash all the sand castles on the beach?

OM: Oh, man. Are they going to do it while I'm there?

KN: Yeah, while you're there. It could be a long time, could be many hours. You'll be there though.

OM: Ummmmmm, yes. I have seen enough sand mandalas made to believe that it's the *journey that matters*. But I would still be mad. [laughs]

KN: All right. Okay, let's see if that same attitude works on a larger scale.

OM: Uh oh. Probably not. [laughs]

KN: Would you build a *life* if you knew someone was coming to destroy it? You know, like home, family, garden, pets, podcasts. I dunno. Just whatever parts of life make life beautiful. Would you build such a life knowing someone was coming to destroy it?

OM: Uhhhh... Well. Yes. Because we all are doing that all the time. Bad stuff can happen any time and all you can do is build the kind of life that you would want to keep having...

KN: Yeah. On an everyday basis I feel like we mostly live like none of that bad stuff is *really* gonna happen. You know, it feels like our life is fairly stable and permanent. But if you *knew* someone is coming to destroy your life.

Well, I have for you today the story of Zazil-Ha. A Mayan woman who built the sandcastle when she knew people were coming to smash it.

OM: Zazil-ha. Spell that please.

KN: Z. A. Z. I. L., Sometimes spelled Z. A. C. I. L. dash HA. Zazil-Ha.

OM: Fabulous name!

KN: Yes! But not only did she build the sandcastle, she built it when all the people around her were telling her not to do that. They were saying, "This is the wrong sandcastle. This is... you've got the design completely wrong." Is my sandcastle metaphor holding up here? [laughter]

OM: You have to fortify it...

KN: ...and she followed her heart, not her head, and not what anyone else was saying. She did what was right for *her*. But by doing that, she saved her entire community.

OM: Ah! I love those kinds of stories.

KN: This is the story of the conquest of the Yucatec Maya, the Maya of the Yucatan Peninsula, and before I went to Mexico last month I had never heard this story. And every aspect of this plotline surprised me. This is not the narrative of conquest that we've come to expect.

OM: Oh, good.

KN: It's a love story of the most incredible kind. And it's a story that the Yucatec Maya have told for centuries as the powerful love story that created their race.

OM: Do we get a happy ending?

KN: It depends on how you define 'happy ending.'

OM: That means no.

KN: But it's a beautiful story. It's a beautiful tragedy.

OM: All right.

KN: It's a conquest story like I'd never heard. I was just sitting there thinking, "wow what if Zazil-ha, what if — what if this amazing woman and *her* story was at the heart of the story of the conquest of Mexico.

[theme music]

KN: I'm Katie Nelson

OM: And I'm Olivia Meikle.

KN: And this is What'sHerName.

OM: Fascinating women you've never heard of.

[rainforest noises - birds, frogs, monkeys]

KN: For me, sitting in a magical cenote in Akumal, in Mexico...

OM: Wait. What's a cenote?

KN: A cenote is a cave or sometimes just a cavernous hole full of, usually, crystal clear blue and green water. There are thousands of them spread across the whole of the Yucatan Peninsula. It's straight up *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Just picture, like, where you hide your pirate treasure, that's it.

OM: I just rewatched *Goonies* with my children. It's *Goonies*.

KN: Hey! Yeah. That's a cenote. That's it.

OM: All right. Cool.

KN: You picture it perfectly.

OM: I want to go to there.

KN: Actually, I'll have a forthcoming episode all about them and another fascinating woman associated with them.

OM: Cool.

KN: So, I'm sitting in this magical cenote in Akumal, listening to my guest Gabriel Camé, who goes by Gabo, tell the story of the revered mother of his race. It was profound.

Gabriel Camé: Okay, my name is Gabriel Camé. I am Maya, native to Akumal in Quintana Roo, Mexico. And it's a pleasure to be here with you guys.

KN: So I went to Mexico on a research trip about a month ago. Traveling in covid times was an adventure in itself. I'd never been to Mexico before, and it was a very surprising trip where I ended up being able to, like, help the sea turtles nesting in the middle of the night, because all the scientists were locked down in the cities and... I can hardly believe any of it was real just thinking back on it. And my verdict is [Quintana Roo](#) is a magical, wonderful, delicious, beautiful place and I wanna go back right now. I want to go back all the time.

OM: Good.

KN: We went glamping in the rainforest.

OM: Cool.

KN: It was amazing! The glamping village supported a wildlife rehabilitation center, so we went on a tour of this reserve. We're driving deep into the rainforest with our guide, Gabo, piled into his truck. Most of us were just sitting in the back of his truck. We drove down this impossibly bumpy dirt road into another world. Spider monkeys and Blue Morpho butterflies, colorful macaws. And as Gabo showed us around it was quickly clear to me that Gabo is a special person. He radiated a kind of love and respect for the place--a connection to the place--that I swear the animals could sense because like, the spider monkeys they loved him to death, they would wrap themselves around his head. They had this affection for him. *And* he was a storyteller.

Gabriel Camé: I love history you know and I like getting deeper, you know, and the deeper I get sometimes, I realize that sometimes the history is not told the way it should be, you know. It's been manipulated in some way and I like to do my own version, you know, of the history and I try to imagine how the stuff, you know, happens. I try to put myself mentally in the situation, without the technology that we have. How they actually live, you know, how they feel. It was some things I dream, you know, and I say I would like to be in that moment. For a moment, you know, to see how was everything.

KN: So I asked him if he could tell us about a woman in Mayan history and he immediately said, "Zazil-ha, of course." Never heard of her.

OM: Yeah, I've never heard of her

Gabriel Camé: Her name is Zazil-ha. Zazil-ha is the mother of my race, right? This is how our color get mixed for the first time. And this is why it is really important to bring up this history about Zazil-ha.

KN: Her name means 'Flower in the Water.' And that was crazy because I had just been swimming around these flowers in the water. Really, I like froze to admire them thinking, "look at this incredible thing blooming here in such a place!" And then Gabo said,

Gabriel Camé: Zazil-ha. Ha means water. Flower in the Water. Zazil-ha.

KN: We were just swimming over there this morning and noticed the one flower...

Gabriel Camé: Well those are zazil-has. You've been swimming around zazil-has.

00:10:06 - 00:15:03

OM: It's a sign. Wow. Cool.

KN: Okay. We'll begin with a shipwreck. 1511...

OM: The best way to begin any story.

KN: A Spanish ship laden with gold, is traveling from Panama to Santo Domingo, and it's downed in a storm.

[rain and ocean noise]

Gabriel Camé: It was part of an expedition in Honduras, okay? With Captain Valdivia. They were coming back full of gold. They were caught by a storm in the middle of the ocean. Well, the ships went all the way down and twenty one of these guys are swimming. And after eleven days, they were attached to very small pieces of wood and trying to survive. They arrived on the coast of Cozumel.

KN: And they wash up on the shore, they've made it. But when they look up, they find that there is a huge group of native people staring at them. The Maya.

Gabriel Camé: You know the Mayas in this place they were in celebrations. So, they thought that was a gift from Chuaj Ek, which is the God of War. And they would sacrifice them for him.

KN: Imagine how that must have been. You're the Maya. You're having a festival to honor the Gods, and then the ocean sort of just spews out these bizarre-looking, hairy *people*... maybe? Like you've never seen before.

Gabriel Camé: People that they had never seen before in their lives, you know. What was the impression? How did they see them? I'm pretty sure they didn't see them as humans for the first time, you know?

KN: And, the Maya probably looked pretty terrifying to the Spaniards as well, because they had red paint on their skin, nose rings, elongated earlobes. They wore bright feathers on their head, bones in their ears and their nose. You know these are like nothing they've seen. And they pull the Spaniards off of the driftwood and they say, "They're a gift from the gods! Let's eat them!"

OM: Right!

KN: So they did.

OM: Oh! [laughter] The end!

KN: But *two* of them, they did not eat. Two of them we know were enslaved instead.

Gabriel Camé: Gonzalo Guerrero was one of the prisoners that the Maya kept, with another guy called Jerónimo de Aguilar, and they kept them as slaves. They would feed them but they would make them work really, really hard.

KN: These names ring a bell if people have listened to our episode, [THE TRANSLATOR](#).

OM: Oh yeah!

KN: Remember the shipwrecked Spaniards? These are the very same shipwrecked Spaniards. Aguilar the monk and Guerrero who is a carpenter. He had special skills.

Gabriel Camé: He had special skills. He knew how to do stuff with wood, you know, like little chairs. So that caused a lot of attention of the local Mayas in Cozumel. And they decided not to sacrifice him, you know, not to kill him because he will do special things. Things that the Mayas will never see before and that will impress them. So they would say, "We're not gonna kill him," right? "We will see what this gentleman can do for us. Maybe he can be useful."

KN: They thought he was like a weird-looking alien guy, but he could do these things that they had never seen before. Like, Gabo told us how he could take a string or a piece of gut and carve some wood and make music, make them a guitar, which they had never heard before.

Gabriel Camé: When he was living with the Chief Nachán Can, leader of the Mayas in a place called Xaman-ha, that today we know of as Playa del Carmen. In all of these areas, right, from Cancun all the way to Tulum and Chetumal, all around, because there would be different cities, you know? The history says that he meets Zazil-ha. It's believed that she was sixteen years old when she met Gonzalo Guerrero. Nachán Can daughter or sister, we don't know. And actually, he really fell in love with the whole culture, and he fall in love with her.

KN: This is why we need a movie of this plot because there needs to be a montage here, right? First they catch each other's eye. Then they give each other the time of day, and I feel like they must have connected over the fact that they could see that spark in each other that nobody else could see. Because as far as the Maya were concerned, they were both *nothing*. And so they fell in love. But, this kind of love is not okay. It's not okay because not only is he a weird alien outsider, but the Maya *do not* like the way that he is treating Zazil-ha.

00:15:04 - 00:20:03

Gabriel Camé: The rest of the people will actually believe that that guy is not from this world. And look at that woman going with that man that is not from this world. So she did not care what the people was saying, you know, it was more the power of love than anything else. I believe she was also a very brave woman because was going against everything that their religion, their traditions, and everything, especially if she was part of royalty as history was saying, you know. To go against everything that their traditions and religion and laws in the culture will say. Go against it means she was really brave. To go against all of this, I believe, for love.

KN: So, they have a problem with her seeing him as a human, but they also have a problem with the way *he* sees *her*. Problem number one: he appears to value her intelligence. Problem two: he lets her speak. Problem three: he listens to her ideas.

Gabriel Camé: The woman have not a very good position in the Maya culture, because they were not allowed to talk.

KN: Women?

Gabriel Camé: Exactly. They were, I mean, they can talk, right, between them, but they were not allowed to talk in front of men, okay. So for them to speak, you know, in front of people? That was really something amazing. Probably the Mayas won't actually believe they will live to see a woman is speaking in front of the people. This is why I say, is really important, and that they were really brave to do it. Because if one of these ones will dare to do that just because she *wants*? Probably she's going to get killed. So this is why I insist that they were very brave because they went against everything, you know, that they were supposed to do.

[Music]

KN: Wow. So he comes in, the Spaniard who's like, actually I happen to know some powerful, very smart women: namely, the Queen of Spain. I believe women actually have things to contribute and are of value!

OM: That's a *really* good way to get eaten, Guerrero.

[laughter]

KN: Good point! But, but not if Zazil-Ha is as brilliant as he suspects that she is. They fell in love. They dared to love each other. But what I love so much about this love story is the way they lifted each *other* up. It was the respect they gave *each other* that made everything possible.

[music]

KN: At this moment it really just looks like they're daring in their love, because it's real and true. And Guerrero, he's adopted Mayan ways, he speaks their language, he's covered himself in tattoos. He even made a special effort to tell the Maya, "Look, these Spaniards, we're not Gods. We're not supernatural beings. We're not anything mysterious. We're human just like you." And he even cut himself to show the king.

00:20:03 - 00:25:00

Gabriel Camé: He actually cut a little bit himself, you know, and show them the blood, right? Show them, you know, we have the same blood that you have. We're not Gods.

KN: They didn't know that their love was gonna turn out to be such a big deal, such a saving grace for everyone in the Yucatan. But that's life I guess.

Gabriel Camé: I don't think she realized how important the fight that she was doing, how important was. I don't think nobody realized in that moment how important the fight.

[music]

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[rainforest noises]

KN: Now when we speak the Maya in say, like, 1515, that's about where we're at right now. It's worth noting this is not the Maya who built those giant pyramid temples.

OM: Yeah! The Mayan collapse, all of a sudden all these cities just get abandoned, and nobody knows why, and...

KN: Yeah. So of course there's all kinds of theories from deforestation and war, rebellion, or of course, the aliens went home?

OM: Yeah. [laughs] That's obviously it.

KN: And the Yucatan was abandoned for centuries. And we do now know for sure, it was deforested, it was just a no-man's-land. But in the centuries that the Maya were gone, that they had abandoned all of this, a surprising ally rebuilt the rainforest.

Gabriel Camé: Who helped, or what helped to rebuild all of this was especially the spider monkeys. Because the monkeys, they love these sort of trees we have here. So they eat the fruit and they eat everywhere with the seeds. So when they digest, you know, they spread the

seeds around the jungle and another tree grow up. So it takes around two hundred years and it was again, you know, green. And so the Mayas came back, and they were using those same cities.

OM: Oh cool!

KN: Yeah, I love that. Especially because I'd spend the previous day chasing Gabo through the rainforests, he's like, "Come on, come on, come on come and look!" and we're, like, following these group of spider monkeys that are swinging through trees above our heads, and Gabo's telling us what's going on, "This male is establishing dominance over that male," and I was just straight-up National Geographic for a second there.

OM: I've never been to the Yucatan, but I had a very similar experience in Belize and in Costa Rica, with spider monkeys and howler monkeys and capuchin monkeys all swinging round all around me going, "*What is my life?!*"

KN: Awesome! And now the nature reserve helps rehabilitate wild spider monkeys to release them back into the rainforest, so this is kind of cool. They're kind of returning the favor, right? Monkeys brought the rainforest back, and now humans, the Maya, are trying to bring the monkeys back from the brink.

So! *Our* Maya -- Zazil-ha's Maya -- they're the people who came back, and they found the long abandoned pyramids and cities, and they lived in the Yucatan again. Now, while Gonzalo Guerrero is coming to embrace his new life, and his new Mayan identity -- he knew more than any Maya. He knew who the Spanish were, he knew they were coming, and they were coming to annihilate. He *knew* that. And Zazil-ha believed him. And she said, "We've got to share this knowledge, not just with our people, but with *all* the Maya. They need to know what's coming! They need to know who, and what, the Spanish really are!"

00:25:00 - 00:30:07

KN: That was a really radical move in itself because in Maya culture, knowledge is not shared. Knowledge is kept, it's protected - that's the source of power.

Gabriel Camé: The thing also is that the Mayas, as they were, very small kingdoms, you know. And their royalty won't share their knowledge to the other ones, you know. They will always be fighting, they will always have war.

KN: But Guerrero and Zazil-ha, they want to share the knowledge, they want to spread the word. And Guerrero especially, he's got a really important message. He says, "We Spanish - we're not your friends."

Gabriel Camé: And we're not Gods, and we just want to take over. And they will come, they will. So I think we should be ready to protect our families, to protect our lives.

KN: And they decided the only way they could possibly survive was to band together, all the Maya, the whole Yucatan. That wasn't the Maya way. At that point these small Mayan Kingdoms, they're all just rivals, nemeses, they'd never unified for *anything*. They were constantly fighting with each other. So, Zazil-ha set to work.

Gabriel Camé: They needed to get organized, because they were very small communities that will fight against each other, you know, I don't like you, and they would fight. But when one was a little bit bigger or smarter, okay, will convince the other one to get together, and they get bigger and bigger. So over here as I told you, it was Tulum, Akumal, and they were all different, kingdoms, kingdoms, kingdoms, well - Zazil-ha make all of them come together and protect the whole Yucatan. Zazil-ha I think he was the most important one, because Nachán Can doesn't want to get involved in any problems, Zazil-ha was the one who communicate what Guerrero wanted to say to the other leaders. And it was really hard for the woman in that time going up the leaders, especially from another community. So she had to break so many rules to go ahead, so she will actually be a very important part of the resistance of the Yucatan.

KN: And while they're doing that, while they have grand vision, they know the Spanish are coming, they don't know when, they know they have to get the Maya to unify as quick as possible. But they're also building a life together. They have kids.

Gabriel Camé: The first son's name was Martin. Their daughter was [unintelligible]. That's my sister's name.

KN: Wait, is she named after her?

Gabriel Camé: Yes.

KN: [happy noise]

KN: And... they became King and Queen of their Mayan state.

OM: What?!?

KN: It's crazy. I mean, they both started out as nothing. He is this shipwrecked outsider and she is a woman who dares to speak.

But everything comes with a price. They had three kids, but their first daughter, they had to offer in sacrifice at Chichén Itzá to end a plague of locusts. That's just the way. The oldest is the most precious, that's the one that gets sacrificed. So, that would have been you, had we been born in a different time and place.

OM: Thanks a lot. I *am* the most precious, and the best.

[laughter]

KN: And so killing you would do us the most good...

OM: Wait a minute, wait, no... Equality, equality for all!

KN: No, too late. I'm sure it would have abated after we killed you.

So that's what happened. That's what happened with their oldest daughter.

OM: I don't like this story anymore.

Gabriel Camé: Also they had to be really strong because they knew that sooner or later the rest of these conquistadores will arrive, and they will do something to their families. They had to be really strong mentally to go ahead and have a nice relationship or family.

00:29:57 - 00:35:02

KN: And, of course, the Spanish did arrive. But in a strange form: in the form of Jerónimo de Aguilar, the other shipwrecked Spaniard who was enslaved in a neighbouring village. He showed up with incredible news. He said, "Great News! Hernán Cortés is here! The Spanish conquest has begun, and we can free ourselves and go and join him in the conquest of Mexico!" Aguilar's account says that Zazil-ha was sitting there, part of the conversation. She got incredibly angry at Aguilar and said, "How dare you suggest that his place is anywhere but here! This is his family, he is our king!" and she threw him out.

Cortés sent a contingent into Maya territory a couple times, to test the waters, and each time the soldiers came back beaten. And they could *not* figure it out.

Gabriel Camé: In the beginning they did not understand, "How come it looks like the Mayas know where we are getting in, how we are moving?" and then they understand it was Guerrero was teaching them. He already knew, right, he was part of all of these techniques.

When Cortés realize, they decided to start to move into the north part of Mexico because... Aguilar told Cortés, just let's forget about Gonzalo Guerrero and we're going to move to the north of Mexico. I heard about a big city made of gold. They were talking about Tenochtitlan. So this is why they decided to move. And it gave them twenty-five years, you know, to Gonzalo Guerrero and Zazil-ha, to live in peace.

KN: It's amazing to me, this moment in history. And Guerrero didn't just train the men how to fight the Spanish, which would have done if you were Maya. But he trained Zazil-ha too. She was there learning the exact same skills, she became a Warrior Queen leading her people on the battlefield. A woman! And previously women were... dirt! You know...

OM: No talking!

KN: Let alone have an opinion. Let alone be a leader. And she wielded a sword, she knew how to fight on horseback - which was a *very* new thing. She was *fierce*.

Gabriel Camé: A brave woman that she was against everything that the culture in that moment. And that she fight for the love to her family, and she learn how to speak Spanish. We know that she help also like a warrior in the fights against the Spanish people, next to this husband.

KN: They kept their sandcastle for twenty-five years. In fact, the whole of the Yucatan kept their sandcastles for twenty-five years.

OM: Wow.

KN: Long enough to have a family. Gonzalez Guerrero lives to a ripe old age, he's into his sixties - well into his sixties. But the Spanish *were* coming. It was inevitable and they *knew* it. So they stayed ready. Can you imagine just building your entire life knowing at any moment, it will all be destroyed.

OM: That's nuts.

Gabriel Camé: So she was around twenty-six, twenty-seven, maybe thirty years old when the Spanish people arrive again to take over. So she was very experienced. And if she was brave when she was sixteen, can you imagine how strong she will be when she was probably twenty-five, thirty?

Francisco de Montejo arrive over here in Yucatan, and the Mayas were very strong by that time. So they just kick them out.

KN: From the beach?

Gabriel Camé: Exactly. Yes, from the beach. Just take them away. They left. It took them another fifteen years to come back. So they actually... in the end, they arrive, right? So what did they do? They realize the only way that they can beat Gonzalo Guerrero and his Maya army is attacking from both sides. So they came from the Yucatan and they came from Honduras. But they came from Honduras first. The messages arrive to this area and they say -- because Gonzalo Guerrero was a known guy by this time, everybody the Maya world will know who is Gonzalo Guerrero, you know, the white man -- and they will ask for help.

So Gonzalo Guerrero joined with 150 cannons with 50 Mayas each, and they left all the way to the rest.

00:35:11 - 00:40:09

KN: Zazil-ha stayed to defend their kingdom. And its modern-day Playa del Carmen. So that's like, in-between Cancun and Tulum.

Gabriel Camé: Francisco de Montejo with another army came. And they, of course, you know she was a warrior, she already knew how to protect the family, how to fight, she already knew the techniques that Gonzalo Guerrero will teach her. That's why he had the confidence to go and leave her with her kids. So when Guerrero arrive in Honduras, they fought against the

Spanish people, they shot him in the heart. And according to the histories, that his last words were, "Take care of my family and never stop fighting."

KN: The Spanish soldiers, when they were cleaning up the battlefield, were *shocked* to find among the dead, a Spaniard! With a beard, but his body totally covered in tattoos. And it's their accounts that is our best evidence that Gonzalo Guerrero died in that battle.

Gabriel Camé: So it was really weird for them to see a Spanish guy all dressed up like a Maya, with the holes in the ears, you know, with tattoos in the face. So they didn't know who he was, but a lot of them have heard about Gonzalo Guerrero. So when they saw him, they knew immediately, they killed Gonzalo Guerrero. And this is how they... because when Gonzalo Guerrero died, the whole army stopped fighting. Because they didn't have their leader anymore. Yes and this is how Francisco de Montejo took over, and they conquered the Yucatan.

OM: Okay. But what happened to Zazil-ha?

Gabriel Camé: She was the leader, of course. She was the one who will lead the warriors to battle. So I believe it was not very easy also for whoever came, you know, in her community? I believe they fight really really hard. And that they resist a lot you know. And I believe she was not hiding somewhere, but protecting her family. You know I try to put myself in their shoes. And try to picture the moment, and then you realize how brave you need to be to do this kind of stuff, to protect with your life, your whole community. I believe that in the end probably she knew how important she was. And her actions were. And the decisions she took, how important they were for the family and community, and probably that gives her more courage, you know? To be stronger and to fight.

KN: She died, we believe, in battle.

Gabriel Camé: We believe in battle. Yes.

In the beginning, to be honest, for the Mayas to see them, they were very different to us. But she fell in love, and she went against everything to keep her love. And that was the best she could do, not only for her, but for all the community. Without knowing! Because thanks to that love that they had, they resisted for twenty-five years. And we are here thanks to that. You know, my people, my family.

[music]

00:40:05 - 00:45:29

KN: The Maya were conquered. But not before Zazil-ha and Guerrero had created a new race, and restructured the Mayan people, and given women a voice, and they put the Maya and the Spanish on equal footing -- they *changed the world* before they lost that game. She is celebrated as the mother of all of them.

Gabriel Camé: This is my impression about her, that she was a very brave woman. And nobody tell her what to do. This is my impression, that in the end, she save her people because you went to what her heart was feeling, not what the rest of the people was telling her. She actually save not only the community, but the whole Yucatan. And give them twenty-five more years of life, the Mayas. And not even the Mayas knew that, that it was thanks to *her* that they actually live way longer.

KN: And this is what I find so amazing about Zazil-ha's story. She's not fighting the Spanish per se. She loved and married a Spaniard. But she and Guerrero are fighting to create, and then preserve, a new way of life. The Maya way of life but with more empowered women, and with more resources and knowledge. It's not the story you expect. A great love story at the heart of one of history's most earth-shaking conquests. I mean I'm amazed I've never heard of her, but Gabo says that people in the Yucatan have never heard of her. The story is disappearing in the narrative of the conquest.

Gabriel Camé: In Playa del Carmen, the main residentials are Gonzalo Guerrero and Zazil-ha, right next to. But nobody knows why! Nobody, if you go to Playa del Carmen, and ask them who is Zazil-ha, nobody knows. This is really sad because I -- especially here, the people is not really interested. I don't know, I think we're losing a lot. Our traditions, our culture. This is why I believe that is really important. Get into history, and get to know a little bit more about her, because she was really important as I say! You know is the mother of the race, of the of the actual culture right now, of all the mestizos that we have over here.

The history, I believe it's been manipulate, you know, so we can honor some people. So this is one more time, this is why I really believe is really important to get deeper into history and so we can share and get to know more about Zazil-ha. Because I am pretty sure that if we know and we will be very impressed about Zazil-ha.

KN: This is one of those huge "what ifs." What if they had won? That's a marriage of old and new world, where they're trying to create like the best of both worlds, and

OM: Mixing in instead of conquest, and...

KN: Oh, what if?! But even today I wonder, even though they weren't the winners, what if we put them in the spotlight? What if their story was one that we all told? There's even a Zazil-ha cenote outside Tulum popular with tourists, but I couldn't find *any* travel guide that mentioned the connection of the actual Zazil-ha, with the name of that cenote. And some of them even just said, "Zazil-ha means clear water." [laughter] NO, don't you know? It's actually amazing...

There's *got* to be more out there about Zazil-ha. There *has* to be more we can unearth. What she dared to do and what she dared to build? Knowing full well the risks inherent in all of it? I am just in awe.

Gabriel Camé: She was going against everything for the love, and in love to her family. So I believe that we should learn that it really doesn't matter where you're from. We are all the same in part of this big living organism.

[music]

[rainforest sounds]

00:45:29 - 00:48:31

Special thanks to Gabriel Camé and the Akumal Monkey and Nature Reserve? Gabo especially invites visitors to the Yucatan and encourages you to venture out of the resorts to see the real Mexico and I cannot recommend it enough. In fact, if you enjoy traveling, you can now [travel with *What'sHerName*](#). Check out our website, What'sHerNamePodcast.com, where you can get all the details on [upcoming trips in 2021](#) - visit sites and meet the scholars that we interview in your favorite episodes of *What'sHerName*. We're going to Greece and to Britain in 2021.

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Music for this episode was provided by [Musica Maya](#), [Ricardo Lozano featuring Jorge Ramos](#), [Jeff Cuno](#), [Savfg](#), [The Mini Vandals](#), and [Chris Haugen](#). Our theme song was composed and performed by [Daniel Foster Smith](#). And I'd like to extend a very special thanks to my audio tech onsite in Mexico, Shelby Durant, who was so dedicated to her role that - I found out afterwards - she got stung by a bee while we were recording and she just stayed utterly silent to not disturb the recording. So special thanks, Shelby Durant!

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