

# Houston, We Have a Problema

by Gwendolyn Zepeda

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## About the Book

Jessica Luna is your typical 26 year old: she has man trouble, mom trouble, and not a clue what to do with her life (though everyone else in her family seems to have plenty of suggestions!) After a lifetime of being babied by her family, Jess is incapable of trusting herself to make the right choices. So instead, she bases all of her life decisions on signs. She looks to everything for guidance, from the direction her rearview-mirror-Virgin-de-Guadalupe sways to whatever Madame Hortensia, her psychic, sees in the cards.

When her sort-of boyfriend Guillermo, a gifted unmotivated artist, disappoints her again, Jessica thinks it's time to call it quits. Just to be sure, she checks in with Madame Hortensia who confirms that yes, it is time for a change. (Who knew \$20 could buy so much security!) Right on cue, Jess meets Jonathan; he's the complete opposite of Guillermo --- of all Jess's boyfriends, in fact. He's successful, has a stable job... and is white. Jess isn't sure if Jonathan is really the change Madame Hortensia saw. Sure he gives great career advice, but is he advising her on a career she actually wants? And yes he's all about commitment, but is it Jess or her mother who really wants marriage?

Jess runs back to Madame Hortensia for advice, but even she is out of answers. Now there's only one thing that's certain: no one --- not her mother, her sister, her boyfriend or her psychic --- can tell her what to do. For better or for worse, Jess will have to take the plunge and make her own decisions if she wants to have any future at all.

## Discussion Guide

1. At the beginning of her story, Jessica is ?dating? Guillermo. She hides their relationship from her family and doesn?t seem quite comfortable with it herself. Why does Jessica get involved with Guillermo and continue to see him, despite her own misgivings? Is it just the hot sex, or is she getting something else out of it?
2. Jessica talks about feeling more comfortable dating men who grew up the way she did ? knowing how it feels to eat

beans and rice for dinner or to have the electricity cut off once in a while. Do you think relationships are easier when the people involved have similar backgrounds? Are there challenges to overcome when dating people from different economic classes or different cultures?

**3.** When Jonathan first shows a romantic interest in Jessica, she worries that he is attracted to her only because she is Latina and therefore "exotic." Should that be a concern? Is there anything wrong with being attracted to people of a certain culture? How is that different from preferring blondes or brunettes, or tall men, or men with hairy chests?

**4.** Jessica's job at McCormick is completely unrelated to the career she'd hoped to have. At the end of the book, she leaves that job for one that pays less but suits her better. Was she foolish to leave McCormick instead of trying harder for a promotion? Is finding your dream job something that happens only in books or movies?

**5.** Jessica is very superstitious. She begins to believe in fortune-telling at a low point in her life. Was her superstition a product of her upbringing or an excuse to avoid making tough life decisions? Or both?

**6.** How does Jessica's relationship with her parents affect her decisions? How does it affect her relationship with her sister, Sabrina?

**7.** How does Jessica's relationship with Sabrina affect her decisions? How does Jessica feel about the choices Sabrina has made in life? Is she jealous? Disappointed?

**8.** Madame Hortensia makes money every time Jessica needs help making decisions about her life. Why, then, does the fortune-teller eventually admit that she doesn't have any psychic powers? What do you think about what Madame Hortensia does for a living? Is it dishonest? Is it wrong?

**9.** In the end, Jessica decides that she and Jonathan don't belong together. Why? Do you think her decision was based on cultural differences, and if so, was it wrong of her to base it on that? What assumptions does she make about Jonathan? Does she end up changing her mind?

**10.** Did you expect Jessica to end up with Xavier in the end? Were you disappointed when she didn't?

**11.** How did Jessica change from the beginning of this story to the end? What did she learn? Did you learn anything from her experience, or were her lessons things you already knew? Do you know anyone who might benefit from sharing Jessica's experiences?

**-A Spanish version of this discussion guide is available, which you can read [here](#).**

## **Author Bio**

Gwendolyn Zepeda lives in Houston, Texas. Her blog [gwenworld.com](http://gwenworld.com) and her first book **To The Last Man I Slept With and All the Jerks Like Him** have been mentioned in the *New York Post* and *Seattle Post*. Zepeda is a member of Nuestra Palabra, which hosts Houston's Latino Book and Family Festival, the largest book festival in Texas.

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