

# "Have you got a girlfriend yet?"

by Choon Young Tan



"Have you got a girlfriend yet?" Is the question constantly asked.

Extended family are both nosy and suspicious.

What's it got to do with them?

Is it to compare their sons' girlfriends with mine?

Or is it to see if I've got good taste?

Or is it just to ensure I'm not a massive homo?

"Have you got a girlfriend yet?" I was asked every time I was in Malaysia as a teen.

And despite the same awkward "no" in response, it only leads to more questions.

"Why not?" And "you're still young, right?"

Or "you want to focus more on your studies?"

Yeah, that must be it...

"Have you got a girlfriend yet?" Thankfully the question never deviates beyond that.

It means I don't have to lie when I say "no."

It soon becomes the norm you have to dread and be prepared for.

And thankfully the question never moves on to "is it because you're gay?"

It's almost as if they don't want to ask, despite your suspicions of their suspicions.

But where do we go from there as I enter an age when I "should" be married?

"Have you got a girlfriend yet?" Is a question years later I still worry about answering.

Especially after not seeing them for so long.

There have been more important changes for us to worry about than having a rainbow sheep in the family.

But it's a question that is surprisingly never asked this time.

Have they given up? Do they know? Do they care?

Do I care? It's hard to say.

"Have you got a girlfriend yet?" Is a question I've wanted to find the courage to answer with my full truth.

But at the same time, for now I'm saved from the bother of the potential controversy.

It's a question I wonder will ever surface again.

It's a question I still don't know for sure how I'll respond again.

But it's a question that will be as normal in our culture as I know being gay is normal.

And for me, that's the truth I can live with.