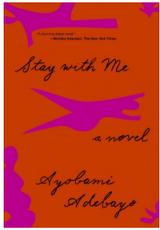


Stay with Me



[view in catalog](#)

With economy of language and a taut emotional underlying, [Ayobami Adebayo](#) tells the parallel tales of a young couple's marriage, alongside Nigeria's struggle for independence.

Told alternately by Yejide and her husband, Akin, the book opens late in the story to a woman packing her bags. She's done this many, many times before, but something—whether deep feelings or fear—has always stopped her from making the trip to her southwestern Nigerian hometown of Ilesa, once the site of a magical kingdom.

Next, Adebayo takes us back to 1984, when Yejide's four stepmothers introduce her husband's second wife, Funmi. Feeling betrayed, Yejide refuses to look at Funmi, even after her mothers call her "daughter" and "friend"—and anger rises in Yejide when one of her mothers calls her *Iyale* ("first wife"). Yejide is very distressed, not only because Akin promised never to have more than one wife, but because her own mother, also a first wife, died giving birth to her, making Yejide an outsider in her own family. Even as a small child, none of the other mothers allowed her to listen to bedtime stories; at her father's grave, she and her husband stood alone after the other mothers and children moved away from them. In the backstory that follows, we find that Akin and Yejida met at a movie theater, each accompanied by other dates. Yejide feels Akin's eyes on her during the film, and finds herself staring at his wide, pink lower lip when they speak. After the movie, Akin follows Yejide out of the theater, demands her address, then kisses her.

In the four years before Funmi turns the couple into a triangle, Yejide fails at conceiving a child. She intensely wants a baby—not only to fulfill familial and societal expectations, but because she wants someone to love her totally for herself, and not dividing their love between her and others as Akin does. Meanwhile, alongside personal traumas, joys, and friendships, the country of Nigeria implodes. A promised election has been postponed innumerable times; crime is rampant. Even the middle-class estate where the story's family lives must resort to hiring guards, who shoot in the air occasionally to let the neighbors know that they're doing their jobs.

Although there are many light moments in this novel—especially at the hair salon Yejide owns—this is ultimately a serious book that, though modern, also shares values and sayings from an ancient culture regarding marriage, infertility, and the loss of children. When a child dies, for example, parents may never visit the grave. And to mark the evil spirits of a dead child, relatives allow the slashing of the corpse so it will be apparent whether a new baby has been touched by the evil spirits.

Aside from learning about Nigeria and a far different culture, what I liked most about this book were the adages Yejide shares. Here are two:

“Even the tongue and the teeth cannot cohabit without fighting.”

“Before you call the snail a weakling, tie your house to your back and carry it around for a week.”

Posted by Dory L. on October 31, 2017

[For the Love of Reading](#)

[Family Relationships](#)

[Fiction](#)

[Multicultural](#)

[Stay with Me](#)