

The Seat Next To The King – Synopsis

The year is 1964. President Johnson is in the office of the White House and the civil rights movement has made strides following the incredible March On Washington for Jobs and Freedom. For two men though, the world will change dramatically.

On a September evening, a white man named Walter enters a public washroom in a Washington D.C. park. He waits there for someone else to enter. Someone does enter, but to his surprise, the man is black. Uncomfortable, Walter attempts to leave, but the black man, by the name of Bayard, starts up a conversation that stops him dead in his tracks. With ease and cunning, Bayard gets Walter to admit why he is there: he was looking for sex and Bayard is more than willing to offer that.

The two leave for a small motel near the park. Walter wants to rush ahead, but Bayard is more interested in a slower approach. Seeing Walter's nervousness, Bayard digs into his world and listens to Walter's story, his marriage and a past arrest for illicit sex in a washroom. Walter finds a sympathetic ear in Bayard who speaks about his own encounters. Frightened by the idea of getting caught, Walter attempts to leave, but with compassion, Bayard convinces him to stay the night.

The next morning, a fury of panic erupts as Walter makes a break to get to his job. He is confronted suddenly by Bayard's ability to learn who he is, an employee of the government situated right in the White House. Walter is put at ease by Bayard who recounts his own struggle with his black colleagues in the civil rights movement. Panic sets in as he realizes their connections and Walter leaves quickly, informing Bayard that they will not see each other again.

20 years pass for the two men, but fate intervenes and they cross paths in a public washroom in Texas. Walter attempts to evade Bayard, but he is called out for his lies. Bayard attempts to reconcile the washroom arrest that occurred for Walter following their last meeting, resulting in his marriage ending and losing his job. Walter, however, believes that his life is over and that he deserves this treatment for who he is. Bayard confronts him on this, causing Walter to erupt in anger that Bayard knows all too well. As Walter breaks down, Bayard shares a moment of connection. As Walter leaves, his future is uncertain and Bayard has to let Walter leave.