Destiny vs. decision; fatalism vs. free will. Call it nature vs. nurture, if you like. The question of whether Man controls his own life or if his future is written in the stars from the beginning is one that has inspired fervent debate amongst poets, philosophers, and theologians for centuries. In *The Adjustment Bureau*, a young and ambitious politician from New York, David Norris, discovers the answer to the age-old argument when he stumbles into a door that should have closed in his face, to find the Adjustment Bureau doing their thing. That is, making life over the way it’s supposed to be.

You see, there is a Plan. One carefully constructed master plan for everyone, meticulously plotted out by an inscrutable Power behind the scenes known only as the Chairman. The members of the Adjustment Bureau are the Chairman’s field agents, charged with “adjusting” events—and people, even their memories—to ensure everything stays on script. But David has gone totally out of bounds, thanks to an unforeseen mishap that introduces him to a beautiful dancer named Lisa. Having met her, David can’t live without her. In fact, no matter what the Adjustment Bureau throws in his way, he refuses to let Lisa go. No matter what the script is, David is determined to write his own story, and the only happy ending includes Lisa.

Undeniably, *The Adjustment Bureau* is ambitious, and on a certain level quite thoughtful. The two leads, played by Matt Damon as David and the lovely Emily Blunt as Lisa, are charismatic and sympathetic. But the story as a whole just doesn’t work. Despite its philosophical pretensions, *The Adjustment Bureau* is doomed by an inherent silliness that its lofty ideals never manage to rise above.

For one thing, the Adjustment Bureau itself comes off as amazingly inept. How can these bumbling characters—usually old men in bowler hats—really control everything? They can’t even keep from nodding off on park benches when they should be making history. The Bureau never really comes across as all-powerful, or even genuinely threatening once it realizes David is out of control. When David decides he’s going to follow his own plan, Fate seems remarkably easy to beat. Moreover, the end is a cheat, a philosophical compromise that renders the rest of the movie utterly pointless. Too bad the Bureau didn’t get to “adjust” the screenplay.