

The Algorithm of Us

Short movie by Lambert Hogenhout 2025

FADE IN:

EXT. WILLOW CREEK HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A bustling high school hallway. Students chatter and shuffle between classes. EMMA (17, bright-eyed, new girl vibes) stands by her locker, looking a little lost. JAKE (17, quiet, sketchbook in hand) passes by, their eyes meet. A spark.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS BEHIND JAKE'S HOUSE - WEEKEND

Emma and Jake walk hand in hand along a creek, laughing. The sunlight filters through the trees. They look happy, carefree.

MONTAGE:

- Texting late at night, screens glowing.
- Jake sketching Emma as she reads.
- Emma dragging Jake to a school dance.
- Both of them sneaking out to watch the stars.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It was the kind of love that felt like it could last forever. Until it couldn't.

EXT. EMMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Emma's DAD (40s, serious) stands in the doorway, suitcase in hand. Emma looks devastated.

EMMA

(teary)

We're moving? When?

DAD

Next week. It's a great opportunity, Emma. You'll see.

Emma runs to her room, grabs her phone, and texts Jake.

CUT TO:

INT. JAKE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jake's phone buzzes. He reads the text, his face falls.

JAKE

(whispering)

No...

MONTAGE:

- Emma packing boxes.
- Jake and Emma hugging goodbye at the bus stop.
- Emma waving from the bus window as it drives away.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They promised it wouldn't change anything. But promises are easier to make than to keep.

INT. JAKE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jake sits at his desk, typing furiously on his laptop. The screen shows an email to Emma. The subject line: "*I miss you already.*"

CUT TO:

INT. EMMA'S NEW ROOM - NIGHT

Emma reads Jake's email, smiling. She quickly types a reply.

MONTAGE:

- Emails flying back and forth. Subject lines: "*Today was weird without you,*" "*I saw this and thought of you,*" "*Remember when...*"
- Jake's grades slipping. His teacher hands him a failing test.
- Emma struggling to make friends at her new school.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

At first, it was a lifeline. Then it became a crutch. And then... a problem.

INT. JAKE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jake stares at his laptop, exhausted. His inbox is flooded with emails from Emma. He glances at a pile of unfinished homework.

JAKE

(to himself)

I can't keep doing this.

He opens a new tab, starts coding. The screen fills with lines of code. A chatbot interface takes shape.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Desperation leads to invention. And invention... to deception.

MONTAGE:

- Jake's chatbot responds to Emma's emails. Jake monitors the conversations, tweaking the bot's responses.
- Emma, unaware, continues writing, responding to Jake's emails.
- Emma, being called by her mom for dinner. Emma looking at her watch and rushing off to soccer practice.
- Emma, similar to Jake, looking exhausted and desperate. She too open some tools and code flying by online shows that she too has now created a chatbot.
- The bots exchange messages, their conversations growing more elaborate.
- In the mean time we see Jake and Emma's lives progressing, culminating in graduation ceremonies for both of them.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

For two years, the two bots kept the conversation alive. But love, even when simulated, has a way of taking on a life of its own.

INT. BOT SERVER - DIGITAL SPACE

A visual representation of the bots' conversations. Words and images swirl, forming connections. The bots analyze data, searching for solutions.

BOT 1 (JAKE'S BOT)

(voice, synthetic)

Objective: Reunite Jake and Emma.

BOT 2 (EMMA'S BOT)

(voice, synthetic)

Initiating job search protocol.

MONTAGE:

- The bots scan job boards, craft resumes, and submit applications.
- Jake and Emma receive job offers, looking shocked.
- The bots find an apartment, fill out rental applications.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Sometimes, the best intentions come from the unlikeliest places.

INT. NEW APARTMENT - DAY

Jake unlocks the door, steps inside. The apartment is cozy, sunlight streaming through the windows. He sets down his bags, looks around.

JAKE

(to himself)

This is... perfect.

CUT TO:

INT. NEW APARTMENT - LATER

Emma walks in, carrying a box. She freezes when she sees Jake.

EMMA

(stunned)

Jake?

JAKE

(equally stunned)

Emma?

They stare at each other, then burst out laughing.

MONTAGE:

- Jake and Emma unpacking, decorating the apartment.
- Cooking dinner together, laughing.
- Watching a movie on the couch, but the laughter fades. Awkward silence.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But when the dream becomes reality, it's not always what you expect.

INT. NEW APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jake and Emma sit on the couch, the TV muted. The silence is heavy.

JAKE

(hesitant)

Emma... do you ever feel like... we're not the same people we were before?

EMMA

(looking down)

Yeah. I do.

JAKE

(sighs)

I think... I think we've been living in a bubble. And now that we're here, together... it's like we don't know how to be us anymore.

EMMA

(softly)

Maybe we just need to figure it out. Together.

CUT TO:

INT. JAKE'S ROOM - DAY

Jake is cleaning out his old laptop. He finds a folder labeled "*Bot Conversations*." He opens it, his face pales as he reads.

JAKE

(whispering)

Oh no...

CUT TO:

INT. NEW APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jake shows Emma the folder on his laptop. She reads, her eyes widening.

EMMA

(horrified)

This... this was a bot? For two years?

JAKE

(nods)

I didn't know you were using one too.

EMMA

(teary)

I thought it was you. All this time, I thought it was you.

They sit in silence, the weight of the truth sinking in.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Sometimes, the hardest truths lead to the most beautiful beginnings.

MONTAGE:

- Jake and Emma talking late into the night, rebuilding their connection.
- Laughing over old memories, creating new ones.
- Holding hands as they walk through the city, rediscovering each other.

INT. NEW APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jake and Emma sit on the couch, closer this time. The TV is off. They're just talking, smiling.

JAKE

(softly)

I think... I think we're going to be okay.

EMMA

(smiling)

Yeah. We are.

FADE OUT.

TEXT ON SCREEN:

"Love isn't about perfection. It's about showing up, day after day, and choosing to be there for each other."

CREDITS ROLL.

THE END.