

Ms Smith & Mr Jones

by Larry K. Elmore

She sees everything. He sees nothing. Together, they see it all.

Jonathon Jones, a charismatic New York culture columnist coasting on charm, has been receiving career-making tips from an anonymous source called "Ms. Smith" for a year—until he discovers she's actually Melanie Barnes, his overlooked photographer who uses lip-reading skills to gather intelligence. Forced into an uneasy partnership after her secret is exposed, they must work together to expose a dangerous Ponzi scheme involving corrupt politicians and a ruthless hedge fund manager, while navigating newsroom rivalries, ethical dilemmas, and their growing attraction as they discover that the biggest story might be learning to truly see each other.

Act 1 - The Secret Source

Jonathon Jones, New York's most charming culture columnist, has been riding high on exclusive tips from his mysterious anonymous source "Ms. Smith" for a year. When he breaks a major story about a fraudulent art fund involving Councilman Moore, his editor Marcie demands he finally reveal his source's identity. Jones suspects Ms. Smith works at the paper—she knows too much, responds too quickly. His photographer Melanie Barnes verifies his information with uncanny speed and precision, but Jones is too focused on his own success to notice what's right in front of him. Meanwhile, rival columnist Morgan Simms begins her own investigation into Jones' secret weapon.

Act 2 - The Investigation Deepens

Jones becomes obsessed with unmasking Ms. Smith, tracking coincidences and patterns that all point to Melanie. When she advises him to leave Councilman Moore's marriage out of his reporting, Ms. Smith sends the exact same message moments later. Jones confronts Melanie, presenting his "evidence"—her coffee preference, her left-handedness, her presence at every event. She deflects with humor, but the walls are closing in. At home, Melanie's deaf sister Ashley warns her the charade can't last. Jones' girlfriend Janice grows tired of competing with his obsession. Morgan Simms watches from the shadows, gathering her own evidence about the mysterious Ms. Smith.

Act 3 - Suspicions and Secrets

Jones confides in his therapist about his fear that Ms. Smith is the real journalist while he's just coasting on her investigative skills. He tells Marcie he believes Melanie is Ms. Smith, but can't prove it. At a campaign event for Councilman Moore, Melanie and Ashley discuss how close Jones is getting to the truth. Chef Andre advises Melanie to stop hiding her ingredients and let people taste what's really there. Morgan confronts Melanie directly, threatening to expose her and destroy both their careers. Jones receives cryptic messages from Ms. Smith that suggest she's watching him, then finally inviting him to meet face-to-face at Rubicon restaurant.

Act 4 - The Revelation

Janice breaks up with Jones over the phone, citing his obsession with Ms. Smith and his inability to prioritize their relationship. Jones arrives at Rubicon and watches as Melanie enters—transformed, confident, visible. She confesses everything: she's been Ms. Smith for a year, using her lip-reading skills to gather intelligence at events, feeding Jones stories to give him his edge back. Jones feels betrayed and used, but Melanie argues she made him better. She proposes they become true partners, sharing bylines and credit. Morgan leaks their secret to a gossip blog. The publisher gives them one week to prove their methods are ethical or they're both fired.

Act 5 - The Partnership Begins

Racing against the clock, Jones and Melanie team up with Ashley to investigate Victor Hale's Ponzi scheme. They discover Councilman Moore's wife Catherine is cooperating with the SEC and her life may be in danger. At the Met Gala, Melanie lip-reads Catherine's conversation and learns the full scope of Hale's criminal operation. They secure documents from Catherine's attorney and publish the explosive story, saving their jobs and earning a new joint column: "Ms Smith & Mr Jones." As they celebrate their partnership, a threatening message from Victor Hale arrives—their next investigation has already found them, and the danger is just beginning.