



The Two-in-One (Animals Culture And Society)

Rod Michalko

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When Rod Michalko's sight finally became so limited that he no longer felt safe on busy city streets or traveling alone, he began a search for a guide. *The Two-in-One* is his account of how his search ended with Smokie, a guide dog, and a dramatically different sense of blindness. Few people who regularly encountered Michalko in his neighborhood shops and cafes realized that he was technically blind; like many people with physical disabilities, he had found ways of compensating for his impairment. Those who knew about his condition thought of him as a fully realized person who just happened to be blind. He thought so himself. Until Smokie changed all that. In this often moving, always compelling meditations on his relationship with Smokie, Michalko probes into what it means to be at home with blindness. Smokie makes no judgment about Michalko's lack of sight; it simply is the condition within which they work together. Their partnership thus allows Michalko to step outside of the conventional -- and even *enlightened* -- understanding of blindness; he becomes not simply resigned to it but able to embrace it as an essential part of his being in the world. Drawing on his training as a sociologist and his experience as a disabled person, Michalko joins a still small circle of scholars who examine disability from the inside. More rare still -- and what will resonate with most readers -- is Michalko's remarkable portrayal of Smokie; avoiding sentimentality and pathos, it is a deeply affectionate yet restrained and nuanced appreciation of his behavior and personality. From their first meeting at the dog guide training school, Smokie springs to life in these pages as a highly competent, sure-footed, take-charge, full-speed-ahead, indispensable partner. *Sighties* are always in awe watching them work; Michalko has even persuaded some of them that the Smokester can locate street addresses -- but has a little difficulty with the odd numbers! Readers of *The Two-in-One* can easily imagine Rod and Smokie sharing the joke as they continue on their way.

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