



*This “legend” was first told at a dinner party in Ancient Greece. It is the colorful invention of the Greek comic playwright, Aristophanes, and was recorded by Plato in a book called “The Symposium.”*

*Most probably, scientists will not agree with all the ideas here about how people originally came into the world. It seems unlikely that we were once shaped like wheels and rolled around instead of walking. However, you might feel that the tale has a powerful inner meaning.*

*Let us know if you think the story is “true”.*

*Adapted for Storynory by Bertie*

*Read by Natasha Proofread by Jana Elizabeth*

## ***The Wheelie People***

*Hello,*

*This is Natasha, and I’m here with a short myth from Ancient Greece. It explains why all of us have one true love in the world. It’s a romantic idea but it’s also interesting because of the special time and place that it was originally told.*

*You probably know that Athens is the capital of Greece. Its name comes from ancient times when it was dedicated to Athena - the goddess of wisdom. Her graceful temple, the Parthenon, still stands on a hill called the Acropolis, high above all the noise and pollution of the modern city.*

*The Parthenon was built about 2,460 years ago. It was an age when it seemed like almost every Athenian was some sort of genius. The city was full of playwrights, philosophers, scientists, poets, sculptors, politicians and generals. They loved nothing better than to discuss ideas about life, the world, the universe and beyond, because they also talked about the gods and heaven and what happens to us when we die.*

*One of those glittering thinkers was a writer of tragic plays called Agathon. He was a handsome and well-dressed young man, who had many friends among the brightest and the best of the city. One evening, he held a dinner party. Everyone who came to enjoy the fine food, drink and music had to give a speech on the subject of love. The guests included some of the most famous people of the day including Alcibiades, who was a popular politician, Socrates, the greatest philosopher of his day, and Aristophanes, who wrote funny plays mocking the great and the good of the city, including Socrates.*

*This story comes from the speech made that evening by Aristophanes. It explains why we humans are looking for our one true love.*

*When people first came into the world, they were very different from the way they are now. In those days, they did not walk on two legs, because they had a much faster way of getting around. They were shaped like cartwheels, and they rolled over the ground. These wheelie people were actually like two persons joined together. They had two faces, four arms and four legs. And that was not all that was different. As you know, the human race is now divided up into two sexes - men and women (or girls and boys if they are younger). Back then, there were three types - men, women, and a combination of both.*

*You might think that some of what I have said sounds rather peculiar. But actually, that's because you are so used to how things are now. Try to see it this way. The Sun, the Moon, and the Earth are a trio of round objects that move in circles. It made perfect sense that people were divided the same way, and followed the same circular pattern.*

*For a long time there was harmony in the universe. The wheelie people made sacrifices to the gods in heaven by burning the best pieces of meat and food. The smoke went up to the gods and pleased them. But there came a time when the wheelie people grew*

arrogant. They got way, way above themselves and decided to rebel against the gods. This had already happened once before when giants lived on earth. The giants tried to climb up Mount Olympus and overthrow the gods. It did not work out well for them, because Zeus, the king of the gods, attacked them with lightning bolts and electrocuted the rebellious giants before they got half way up the side of the mountain.

This time Zeus stood on the peak of Mount Olympus, holding his thunderbolt in his hand, ready to throw it at the foolish humans as they went round in circles. But he felt sad, and did not really want to kill them all. He pondered: "Who will fill our nostrils with the delicious aroma of sacrifices when all the people are gone?" Besides, the silly antics of the human race provided endless entertainment for the gods to watch. At last he smiled and said to himself:

"This is my plan. I won't kill the humans. Instead, I shall cut them in two. They will be half as strong and twice as many. They will be no threat to us gods, but they will give us even more sacrifices."

And then waving his thunderbolt above his head, almighty Zeus directed his army of storm clouds into all out war against the human race. An almighty tempest blew up. Lightning rained down from the skies while the hell-fire from heaven struck each of the wheelie people, cutting them exactly in two. But they were not killed, merely divided.

*From then on, until this day, humans have felt they are weak and vulnerable, and only at half strength. This is why we long to find our other half. We feel this intense yearning to combine with another person, but only the person that we should naturally be joined with. When we are lucky enough to find that one true individual, we feel a powerful attraction, and an almost telepathic connection. We need to hold them close and spend the rest of our lives with them. Only that union can restore us to full strength. The circle is complete, and once again we feel happy, like we did when we were able to wheel freely through the world without any cares. This force, this glue that pulls and joins us together, is called Love.*

*And that's the story of the Wheelie People, that was first told by the comic-playwright, Aristophanes at a dinner party in Athens about 2,500 years ago. The story, and in fact everything that was said at the party, was re-imagined and written down by Plato in his book 'The Symposium'.*

*Plato wrote many works about his hero Socrates, and most of them have come down to us. We also have several of the funny and irreverent plays by Aristophanes. Unfortunately, the tragic plays written by the host of the party, Agathon, have not survived the passing of the years.*

*And remember, the one thing that does last forever is 'Love'.*