

Commentary

After the News: Support for Gay Men and Women Who Love Them

by K.K. Wilder

(Ed. Note: This is the fifth in a series on articles about issues between gay men and the women who love them.)

After coming out to yourself, coming out to the woman who loves you is the most difficult task you've had. But you've finally done it; now you're living with the consequences.

At first, she may have tried denying your news. Maybe she was even relieved--after all, at least it wasn't another woman. Later, in an attempt to be understanding, she probably attempted to learn gay jargon, making the scene with you and your friends at the gay bars. You and she related better sexually for a while because of the new intimacy between you, but that only led to further confusion. Now she's become angry or depressed and you feel helpless.

With one foot in the gay world, the other back with your wife or girlfriend, you don't feel accepted in either. Just what does your being gay mean to your relationship, anyway? Here are several methods of finding help so that, together, you may reach

your own answers to that question:

1. Go to a counselor or support group. Be a careful consumer where therapy is concerned; shop around first. Get answers to key questions before spending money: has the therapist worked with other couples in this situation? Does s/he have preconceived ideas of what is best for you or will s/he respectfully serve as a facilitator while you and your partner work things out? Is the support group meeting full of "ain't-it-awful-Alice" routines or does it give real assistance? If you can't find a support group locally, creat one. No one understands like people who have been there themselves.

2. Educational groups. Several national groups offer direct assistance and serve as spokes in a network. And networking helps. Here are a few contacts:

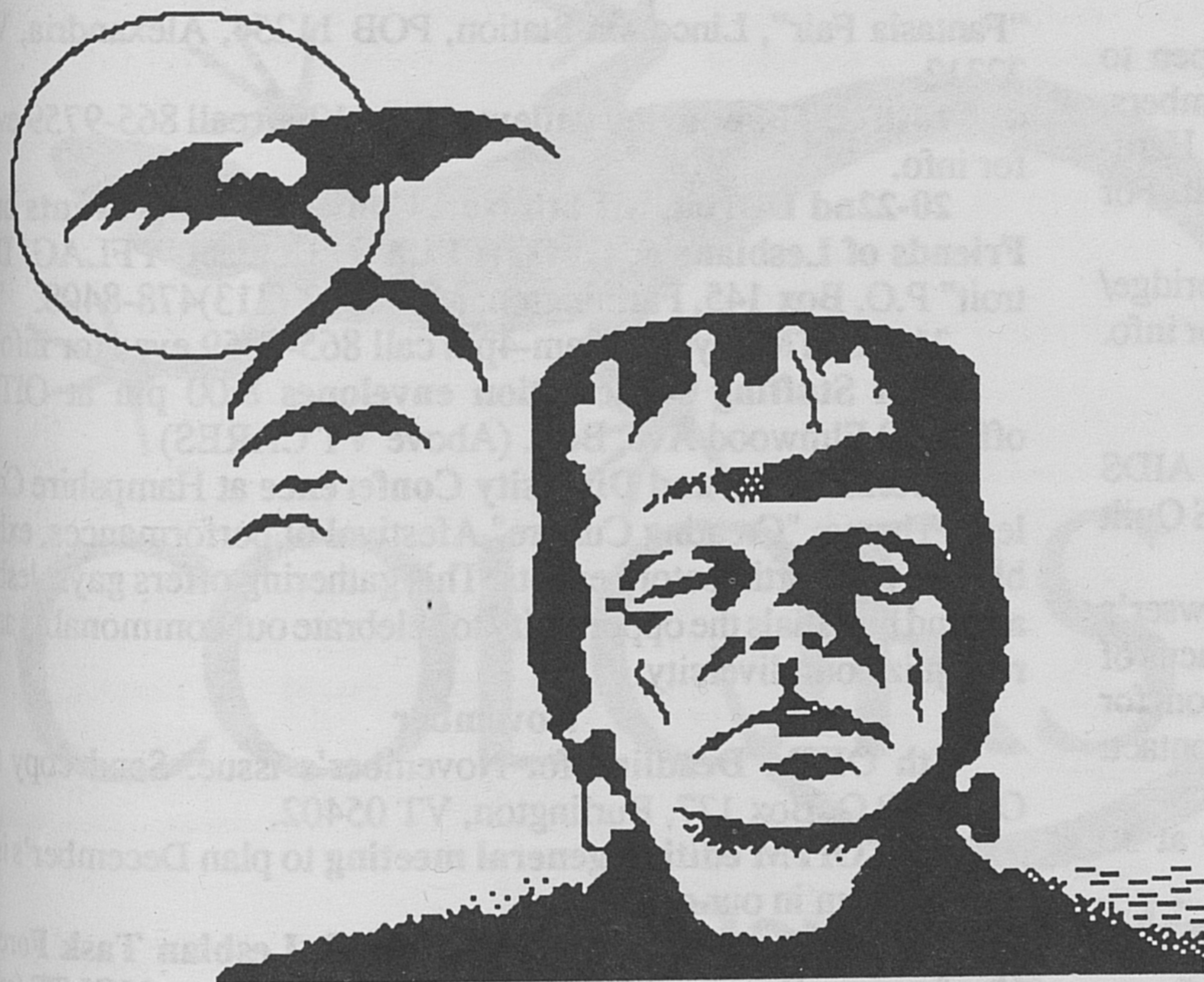
(P-FLAG) Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
PO Box 27605, Washington, D.C. 20038
(202)638-4200
P-FLAG Task Force for Spouses of Lesbians and Gays

651 Madison Street, Denver, CO 80206
National Group for Spouses of Lesbians and Gays
PO Box 8898, Pittsburg, CA 94565
(415)432-9123

3. Read. Read everything you can find on the subject, especially if it tells you what has worked for other people. You won't agree with everything, but the more you read, the more you'll determine you own way of working things out. The Married Homosexual Man, by Michael W. Ross, is heavy going, yet helpful. When Husbands Come out of the Closet, by Jean Gochros, is off-target in a few key areas, but gives good examples of how other couples have coped.

The main thing to remember is this: you and the woman who loves you can be your own best advocates right now. With patience and caring, you can choose paths that support your individual identities and self-esteem. There are no books, support groups, ministers, or counselors who can give you pat answers. As you both know now, only too sadly, love doesn't conquer

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