

NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

SAWYER DEVUYST

Interviewer: Aviva Silverman

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Transcribed by Jamie Wild

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Aviva Silverman: Hello, my name is Aviva Silverman, and I will be having a conversation with Sawyer DeVuyst for the New York City Trans Oral History Project. This is an oral history project centered on the experiences of trans-identifying people. It's January 28th, and it's being recorded in Ridgewood, Queens...Queens, Ridgewood...Queens. Hi!

Sawyer DeVuyst: Hi.

Silverman: Can you introduce yourself?

DeVuyst: Yeah, I'm Sawyer DeVuyst.

Silverman: And you're just telling me that other people pronounce your name differently.

DeVuyst: Yes, based on where they're from. You know, if they're from the South, it's always like, Saww- yerr. And I'm like, oh, you're from the South, obviously.

Silverman: What other kinds of ways do people say it?

DeVuyst: Um, that's kind of it.

Silverman: And are you from the South?

DeVuyst: I'm not. No, I'm from New Jersey.

Silverman: Oh, okay. Mm-hmm. And could you tell me a little about that?

DeVuyst: Sure. I was born in Westwood, New Jersey, which is like northern Jersey in Bergen County. And grew up in Ramsey, also in New Jersey, until I was 13. And then my family moved to Warwick, New York. It was about 45 minutes north. And I lived there until I was 17. So that's all the places I've grown up.

Silverman: And can you tell me about your childhood?

DeVuyst: Yeah! Yikes. So I am one of four kids. I'm the second middle child. And I have two older brothers and a little sister. And we grew up born-again Christian. My mom was a music minister and we would go to church like three times a week. Wednesday nights, Friday night, like revival service, and then Sunday mornings. And sometimes on Friday nights we would be at church until like 2 in the morning or like 3 in the morning. Which was nuts as like a nine-year-old, you know. Yeah, so like very religious. Also grew up very poor. Ramsey is kind of known for being very affluent. But we were like the one family who were like grandfathered in because my dad had built this house in the 70s. Before like all this money came in. *burp* Excuse me. So yeah, we were just like the poor, like dirty family is what I felt like growing up. And then also being, you know, kind of othered because we were also really religious. And I feel like that, at

least that denomination of Christianity wasn't as popular. It was more like Catholics or like Lutherans.

Silverman: Would you mind explaining some of the tenets of born-again Christians?

DeVuyst: Yeah. It's a born-again. So when you're born-again you believe that you have a relationship, like a personal relationship with God. That you can just like talk to him and be like, hey, what's up? You know, like as you go about your day, you're just like talking with God. And it's very, to me, very extreme. There's a lot of judgment, a lot of, in my experience, a lot of hate that comes out of it. Especially towards like LGBTQ people, which was not fun for me. And really anyone who like is not like a straight white person, I think is, you know, kind of othered in that space.

Silverman: And how did that affect you as a child?

DeVuyst: Um, God, I think I just, I grew up thinking that I was less than everyone else. You know, in my family life and also at church. Because we were really poor and I don't remember this happening because I think I just didn't, I didn't understand. But my brothers have told me like, oh no, we were like picked on incessantly and like bullied about the clothes that we wore and that we had like plastic shoes. We didn't have nice shoes from like Models. You know, we have like plastic shoes from like Bradleys or Payless. And so I don't remember that happening, but they specifically said that happened.

I remember there was like an incident in like Sunday school Jackie, like everyone was picking on him with his name and saying like calling him Jacqueline He was like, I'm not a girl. And he like threw a pair of scissors across the room and like threw them at me. And they like hit me in the back of the head and I was like bleeding everywhere. And it was like totally traumatic. But I wasn't calling him Jacqueline. I was just like coloring my little page, you know. So that, yeah, like in the church, I felt like I was never really accepted there.

Because I was different, I was like a little tomboy and like, like I had to wear dresses. But like, still stuck out like a sore thumb. You know, like my stockings were always like halfway down my knees and just like not, not put together. And then would always like bring a change of clothes. So that like after the service, I could go like skateboard in the parking lot. Or go like fuck around with the boys in the parking lot and play, you know. So I never really fit in there.

Silverman: And what did conversations about money look like in your family?

DeVuyst: God, they were always, it was always very tense. I think we, like the kids, were never brought in on those conversations. But it was just known that there was a lot of stress about money. You know, my dad was working, my mom was like a stay-at-home mom. And there were four kids. We lived in like a two-bedroom house. So my brothers shared a room a bedroom, my little sister shared a room with my mom, my dad slept downstairs in the living room on like a recliner chair, and then I slept in the hallway. There was like kind of like a wide, a wide enough hallway that you could put a twin bed and still have a little room to squeeze by. So that was my room. It was like the hallway. And I remember there was like an actual closet in the hallway with

me and you couldn't even open the doors all the way because it like hit my bed. So it was like all very cramped.

And I remember not really having a lot of money for food a lot of the time. My mom would make like a lot of stews and a lot of like pasta. And we didn't really have like money for extra anything. Like there was like a special calculator we needed for school or something that was like a Texas instrument something something for some special math class and like we just couldn't get it, you know. So my mom had to like send me to school with a note for my teacher being like we can't afford this. So I think they maybe maybe the school bought me one. I don't remember. But stuff like that where like we just didn't have extra money for things, you know.

Silverman: And in that era, how did you connect to other people in your life? Did you have any models of people that felt good and safe for you?

DeVuyst: I think I was always pretty close to my dad. Yeah, I was like his first. Well, not his first. So my dad has two other kids from a different marriage. So I have two half sisters as well had one of them passed away But I, for whatever reason, I wasn't his first born daughter, but like he treated me like that and just like treated me special all the time. So I was, you know, I would like go fishing with him and like do all of his like fun things with him. But I think, you know, I was always like his first. But I think, you know, I would like go fishing with him and like do all of his like fun things with him.

But I think there was actually this person named Janet who was like my mom's friend from church who would like come over to pray. And Janet, let's explain Janet. She had like short brown hair. She wore like flannels and like baggy jeans and like what I would describe today as like a butch lesbian. And Janet would come over and anytime she would come over or they would come over or they would come over, I would get so excited and like Janet would be like, oh my God, like where's Sarah? And like we would always just like connect and then they would be like praying with my mom at the kitchen table, but also playing tic-tac-toe with me on my little kitchen set. And I just loved when Janet was around. And then they just like stopped coming around. And I asked my mom and she was like, oh, Janet moved, you know, and I was like seven. So I was like, okay, whatever.

And forgot about it until I came out to my mom in like my mid-twenties. And she was like, do you remember Janet? And I was like, oh yeah, that lady who came over and prayed. And she was like Janet and she was using all types of like insensitive language. She used the word hermaphrodite. It was like who says that anymore? But she was like, yeah, Janet thought she was a hermaphrodite and she was doing testing to find out which hormone she had more of so she could transition, which way, da, da, da. Which is, I don't know if that actually happens, but that's what my mom said it happens. But in that moment, I just like knew energetically that like Janet and I had matched. And I didn't know why at the time when I was seven or eight. But like now looking back on it, I was just like, oh, we knew, you know, like same meet same.

And I've had a couple of other moments with like perfect strangers where like same met same for just like a brief amount of time. And it's like an energetic match. So I think Janet is the first person who I like had that match with. Yeah. And I also have an aunt who I'm especially close with. And she's incredible. I was really close to my nanny, who's my grandma. She was the first person I ever came out to.

She like asked me over Christmas dinner if I was like, if I dated boys with like everybody around. She was like, do you date boys? And I was like, and my brother stepped in and was just like, oh, we're all too busy to date. Like we don't, we're not dating anybody. And kind of like tried to save me. And then everyone left to get dessert and it was just me and her at the table. And she was like, no, really, do you date boys? I was like, do you want me to lie to you And she's like, I don't want you to lie. And I was like, no, I don't. She was like, okay, you know, and didn't say anything else. And that was like Christmas Eve. And then Christmas Day, we were at my mom's house. And my aunt comes in and was like, your nanny would like to speak with you. And I was like, oh God, you know. And she like pulls me into the dining room and there's two chairs facing each other. And my nanny just like pats the chair. And I go and talk to her and she's like, why didn't you tell me before? And I was like, well, my mom said that you wouldn't love me if I told you. And she said you would be embarrassed. And she was like, you, there's nothing wrong with you. I don't know what's wrong with your mom. I did not raise her that way. I just want you to be happy.

And from then on was just like so supportive. You know, would have my girlfriends over for Thanksgiving dinner. And just like treated me like a normal person. You know, asked about my dating life. Didn't try to skirt around it or ignore that it was even there, you know. So I would say, yeah, my aunt Chris and my nanny were really important to me.

Silverman: That's so amazing.

DeVuyst: Yeah, it's amazing that I had them. You know, I think I really needed that.

Silverman: And did you feel when you came out to your nuclear family, there's a lot of religious, I don't know, backlash?

DeVuyst: Yeah, definitely with my mom. My dad, well, there was two comings outs. So there was like, when I was 19, I came out as dating women. And when I think I was 23, I came out as trans again. Because I first came out as trans when I was like six. And that was met with like a whole lot of violence and like not good. So I just stopped talking about it.

Silverman: What did that look like when you were six?

DeVuyst: When I was six? My mom actually caught me peeing standing up and lost it. And just like, I mean, I could say she beat me. I feel like beatings sound like really over the top. She hit me, you know, she was violent. And yeah, I just learned to never talk about that again. And I think that also bled into like expressing my needs. Anytime I would express a need, it was also met with maybe not violence in that way, where I was like physically abused. But my needs were never met. So then I just learned to never like express my needs. And that's still something that I'm like working through, is expressing my needs. Yeah, that's what that looked like. It was not great... [Short silence] And then when I came out when I was 23, somehow she was still surprised that those feelings were still there. And it's like, well, maybe you thought it was a phase when I was six, but like it's coming up again when I'm 23. So like, it's probably not a phase, you know.

I'm probably not just doing this for attention or like whatever else she's thinking it is. Yeah.

Silverman: And when did you come to the city?

DeVuyst: I was 21. Yeah, I lived in Boston. When I was 17, I moved out of Warwick, moved to Boston. I was 21. And I was like, I don't know, maybe I'm not ready for this. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know I don't know Moved to Boston. I was in a band and had no prospect of going to college because we didn't have any money to. So I just moved up there with them because that's where they were going. And then from there, moved to Chicago. Lived in Chicago for a year and I loved it. But my dad got really sick and I felt like I needed to be back in New York where it was closer to him. So I came to New York in 2006 and there's like a little blip where I moved to L.A. But since 2006, I've basically been in New York City.

Silverman: Wow.

DeVuyst: Yeah.

Silverman: And what kinds of neighborhoods have you lived in?

DeVuyst: Oh, God. My first apartment was like off the Graham L. Stop on Skillman Avenue. So that's like East Williamsburg. And then I moved to Clinton Hill. And I lived in Clinton Hill for eight years in one apartment and then three years in another apartment in Clinton Hill. I've kind of always been around Clinton Hill, Fort Greene. Right now I live in Fort Greene. Yeah, Clinton Hill, Clinton Hill. Oh, I was in the Lower East Side for two years, which was really cute. But my upstairs neighbor was atrocious. So I had to leave. Yeah, and then came back to Fort Greene. I've been here since. Yeah.

Silverman: And what kind of scenes have you been a part of?

DeVuyst: What kind of scenes? I think I used to build furniture. For a long time, I had a furniture building company for about eight years. And I was really big into the furniture and design scene. For a long time, I think in like the early... Yeah, like when I got here in 2006, I was really into like going out dancing. And, you know, like multiple nights a week I would go out dancing. Which like, who has the energy for that anymore?

Silverman: Could you tell us where?

DeVuyst: Oh, my God. Okay, so when I first moved here, my favorite place was Caddyshack on 4th Ave, which is no longer there. But I would take the train there, close the bar down at like 4 a.m. And I had to be at my job at Starbucks at 5. So I would ride the subway into the city. I worked at the Astor Place Starbucks. I would ride the train into the city and then ride my skateboard around until I had to be at work at 5. Just to like keep myself awake. And then I would work from like 5 to 11, go home, go to sleep. And then I also worked at a vegan Caribbean restaurant. And I had to be there at 4. So then I worked from like 4 to 11, and then I would go

back to Caddyshack. And it was like this cycle. Just like closing down Caddyshack. And it's not like I was really going there with anyone. I would just go there by myself, just to dance.

Silverman: What kind of music did they play?

DeVuyst: Oh, God. It was like, upstairs was like the 80s. Like 80s throwback kind of music. And then downstairs was always like hip-hop. Like a lot of Missy Elliott, which is like that's where I wanted to be, was downstairs. And it was really cute for a long time. I love that place. And then there's also like Metropolitan was close to my first apartment. So I could just like walk there. There was a place called Sugarland in Williamsburg. I remember when like Original Plumbing, the magazine, came out. That's where their first like launch party was. It was at Sugarland. God, in like a warehouse. That is no longer there, because now it's like a condo. But that was a really cute space. And then there was another one in Williamsburg called The Cave or something. It was on like North 9th, maybe. And it was literally shaped like a catacomb. It was like rounded ceilings and looked like a cave. But that place was really cute, too.

Silverman: Are there places you go to now?

DeVuyst: Not really. No, the last place I went to Body Hack last month. And I felt really out of place. I was just like, I am old. And yeah, like no one was particularly friendly. It just seems like the scene has like changed.

Silverman: Could you describe that more?

DeVuyst: Yeah. It seems to me, and this has happened in other like not nightlife spaces, that like I present very male. So people treat me a certain way. Not taking into account my history because they don't know it. But yeah, people are just not particularly friendly to me or often like wonder why I am, like why I'm there. You know, like, oh, why is this like weird white dude here?

Silverman: In one of those, sorry, go ahead.

DeVuyst: No, it's just, it's kind of like I often feel invisible in that way. You know, like my queerness and my transness feels invisible, which is something I'm like always struggling with.

Silverman: And how would you, in this moment, describe your gender?

DeVuyst: Agender. I think I just don't really see the point of it. You know, in terms of attraction,

I'm attracted to people with all bodies. Like any kind of configuration is attractive to me. So that just leads me to like, what does it even matter, you know? And then for myself, like I think like pre-transition, when I was like a teenager, I was like a masculine female presenting person. I was like pretty butch. Like never cried, Strong, like all these like stereotypically like masculine things, you know And then like once I started transitioning and being seen more male, I think more of my femininity started kind of leaking out. And just naturally, as I was like more comfortable being read as male, I was like, oh now I can do, I can dance. And it's not seen as a female thing, it's seen as like a gay male thing. And so there was that. And then also I think realizing that it like doesn't really matter. Like all of these things could be masculine or feminine. Like dancing isn't inherently feminine, you know? It's also masculine. It's also whatever you want it to be. And I think just like growing in my transness and learning about colonialism and the impact that's had on gender. Learning all of that has really just like broken it down for me that I'm just like, I just don't, I don't care about gender. I know it's very important to some people and that is great. But I just don't feel that way for myself.

Silverman: I'm interested to hear more about how you, and perhaps in transitioning, how it changed your life. Transitioning, how it changed your relationship to dating, and as you said to social space. Yeah, are there spaces that have made you feel more affirmed? Or I guess in contrast alienated and it seems like you just mentioned one party that made you feel that way. But yeah, what are other sites that were either affirming or alienating?

DeVuyst: I think, yeah, it's funny. I think a lot of queer spaces have become more alienating for me. I guess I'll just name it. The Fluid Project. Their first campaign when they first started and had their giant brick and mortar store on Broadway. I modeled in their first campaign. And felt very accepted and I felt fine. I mean, I think a lot of the time I was read as a trans guy because I had my shirt off a lot of the time. So it was very obvious, like, oh, that's why he's here. But then in the months that followed that, I would go into the store and just get the snub from people who worked there. Or I would walk by and there's an event happening, so I would go inside and people would just give me these looks of, like, why did this straight white dude just walk in here? And yeah, I felt really alienated. And like, oh, I guess maybe I don't belong here. So that didn't feel great. So it's just like, I felt like you had to be visibly trans or like a gender clown to be allowed in those spaces. You know, like, over the top, dramatic, and not like me. So that was really alienating. Which is kind of how I felt when I went to Body Hack. That I wasn't showing my trans enough. You know, like, I had to take my shirt off to be validated in that space. Which is really shitty. Because I don't even identify as a man. But I understand that I look like one (laughs) And places I've felt affirmed. I feel really affirmed, actually, at the gym. I really have found a lot of joy in the locker room. And just owning myself and changing very freely. Like, I'm not just going to flash myself around, obviously. But not being... I'm not shy about it. You know, I take my shirt off freely. I take my pants off freely. I am changing to go to the gym. And this is one way that a body looks. And people need to get used to it. And I feel like I can do that more comfortably because I am white and I am male-passing. I think if somebody who was just starting to transition did that, the reaction might be a little different. Or somebody who didn't have top surgery did that, it might be a little different. Or if a black person did that, it might be

different. But that's just one way that I can kind of confront... Yeah, like confront the notion that all men need to have penises and look a certain way. So that I've found really nice.

And also bathhouses. I love bathhouses. I'm a Leo, so I'm very into luxury. Just like that bathhouse in Williamsburg, which is like, fine. It's nice, but I also really like the old-school Russian-Turkish bathhouse. And that place, because I lived in the Lower East Side for a little bit, and I would go there every Sunday. It was like the men's only hours. And I just felt like a water nymph. It was like that really helped me heal a lot of my body issues, was going to that space. And just being naked around... And it was like all these bodies that they're not all toned and fit and young. There's old Russian dudes, there are fat people, there are skinny people and very type of person is there. And yeah, that was just really healing for me. And yeah, that was just really healing for me, to see all the different body types all in one place, and everyone just like... Yeah, just like vibing. It was great. I remember I went to the ice plunge, and I went into the ice plunge once, and there were a couple guys in there. And I just dropped my towel, walked down the stairs, and these guys noticed, but then continued what they were doing. Didn't say anything. And I was like, oh my god, it's so cold. And I said to one of them, at least I don't have much to shrink, and they all just died laughing. It was so good. Yeah, that was a really funny moment. And I'm glad that I could just own that, and it's like a trans joke that's not offensive. So anyway, yeah, I really like those kinds of spaces.

Silverman: Yeah, especially now in the winter.

DeVuyst: Especially now in the winter, exactly.

Silverman: And how else are you spending your time these days?

DeVuyst: A lot of work. I do wardrobe for film and TV, so I'm working on a show right now, The Blacklist, which is fine. It's a money job, so I make my money there, and then I can take time off and do my personal projects, whether it's photography or writing or... just fucking off.

Silverman: Do you want to talk about any projects you're working on?

DeVuyst: Yeah. So I've been working on a script for a while that is about... I don't have my logline set yet, but it's a true crime story that revolves around a crime that happened to my half-sister. My oldest half-sister, in 2017, was murdered in a bank robbery. Yeah, the script is just about how that really changes the life of this family. And throughout 2020 and all of the Black Lives Matter protests and all of the dialogue that was happening, I learned a lot about abolition, and just because I had been in the situation in 2017, I really took all of that abolition dialogue to heart and had been writing this script, so I kind of changed it and thought, like, what is this... the character who is myself, what is this character trying to do? What's his goal? I decided that the goal was to get this man off of death row, because he was ultimately sentenced to death, because it was a federal crime, because it was in a bank. And then in doing that, I was like, well,

if that person in the script can do that, then why can't I do that? So, yeah, I've been working with his lawyers in real life, working with his lawyers and with a restorative justice counselor to, I guess, add my testimony in his appeals process. So that's one project I'm working on. So I finished the pilot script, and I'm continuing with that. And then I also do photography. I have my Sawyer Mine project on Instagram that I kind of took some time off from. It was just becoming too much. But I'm slowly getting back into that, which is just a self-portrait series that aims to humanize trans people and just show that we're like everyone else, that we go to the grocery store, we just do all these mundane things that everybody else does. And that's what the photo project shows, just humanizes the population that many people think that they don't know trans people, but in fact, they probably do.

Silverman: Definitely yeah. I guess I'll just ask a few more questions.

DeVuyst: Sure.

Silverman: If you don't mind. Yeah. How has your experience with healthcare been in New York City? And particularly, I guess, anything related to hormones and just trans healthcare.

DeVuyst: Yeah... hmm.. I would say it's like a love-hate relationship. But... I think it... God, it's like... It should be easier. Like it should... It should be easier. But it's not. I go to a clinic to get my hormones. And... And there were just so many mistakes with the syringes and the needles. Every time I went, they would be wrong. So I ended up just buying them on my own online. So I have hundreds of syringes at home. But I don't ever need to go back to that place to get my syringes, because it was always a nightmare. And just a pain in the ass to every month have to go to your doctor to ask for something. And constantly following up, constantly asking for something. And then it's still not happening. And then... I remember when I first started hormones, it was like... We didn't have the information that we have now. Which I think across the board, trans healthcare has come a long way. Especially insurance, has come a long way. Especially insurance-wise, now insurance is paying for top surgery, which is great. But I also feel a little bitter that I had to pay for mine. Yeah, now people are paying no money to have top surgery.

Silverman: Yeah, how does it feel to be of a different generation in relation to younger trans people that are getting medical help?

DeVuyst: It's... umm.. I'm happy for them. Because that's the way that it should be. But I wish that it had happened earlier. Yeah, I think it changed really quickly. It was in the matter of a couple years, it was like three years, and all of a sudden, all of this healthcare was accessible. And I was like, where was this 10 years ago when I was starting my transition? Yeah, so it's kind of a bummer for me. Happy for them, bummer for me. I think that's it. If that's how I'm going to phrase it, yeah.

Silverman: Have there been any other important people you'd like to talk about that have helped shape who you are?

DeVuyst: Yeah. Hmm, who do I start with? I think... People who have shaped me. I'm totally blanking.

Silverman: That's okay. It's okay

DeVuyst: I'm sure it's... There are definitely people who have shaped me, I'm just thinking. Yeah, I think my ex-boyfriend, Nico. I guess I'll talk about him first. He passed away at the end of 2019. We were in a fight at that time, so I hadn't talked to him in a week. It was over something so stupid. It was over the use of emojis in a text. Yeah, and I was just not... I was not open to learning, so it was completely my fault. He was trying to advocate for something, and I was not having it, and was defensive. So in hindsight, I should have just said, you're right, I won't do it again, and it would have been fine. But that didn't happen, and a week later he passed away. I think I learned a lot from that relationship, because we started dating, and he liked me so much, and was constantly vocal about how much he liked me, which I love as a Leo, but also I was just dealing with the internal voices being like, you don't deserve this. So I pushed him away. So we dated for a while, and then I pushed him away, and I broke up with him, and I gave him some bullshit excuse, and broke his heart. We didn't talk for a little bit, and we got back in touch, and I was just like, actually, I fucked up. Can I say that word?

Silverman: Yeah.

DeVuyst: Oh, okay. I've been saying it. Yeah, I was like, I fucked up, I shouldn't have done that, and I do really like you, and I would like another chance. So we gave it another shot, but kept our relationship open, because he didn't trust me fully, which I get. Yeah, I just learned a lot about why I push people away, or why I attract people who are unavailable, and then when people are available, I push them away. So I've done a lot of thinking about that, and actively trying to not do that. So that was a huge thing to learn. Also, just owning my shit, and when somebody calls you on something, don't get defensive, and start an unnecessary fight. That was stupid. The whole thing was stupid. Yeah, so I learned a lot from that. That relationship. I think another ex of mine, JB who I'm still good friends with, I think she really taught me how to be an adult. We started dating when I was 21, and I think I had a futon bunk bed or something. It was something not for an adult. So I really became an adult while dating her, and learned things that I didn't learn in childhood, like how to pay bills, how to host a party. All of the adult, fun things that I do now, I learned from her. Yeah, and even though we broke up, we're still close. I still love her. It's a different kind of love. It's a friendship, platonic love, but she's been there for me for 15 years now. Yeah, so that's a relationship that I also really cherish. And I think my relationship now, I think I've learned to listen, and to not be sarcastic all the time. There's a time and place for sarcasm, but it's better to just be kind and authentic and genuine, and not play everything off as sarcasm or a joke. So I've learned a lot of that. And I've learned vulnerability, emotional vulnerability. Yeah, I guess how to show up for someone in the way that they need, not in the way that I need to give it to them. That's been a big lesson for me, because I love a grand gesture. I love a show up at your door with flowers and that kind of thing, but that's not always

what somebody else needs or wants. So I think just learning to love people how they need to be loved.

Silverman: That's a beautiful lesson

DeVuyst: Yeah. Yeah, that's a most recent one. And I hope it's very telling of my next couple years. Yeah.

Silverman: Is there anything else you want to share with this archive that feels important?

DeVuyst: Yeah, I think I want to touch on T4T love a little bit, platonically and romantically, because I think it is so beautiful and special, and unlike anything I've felt at any other time in my life. Caring for trans siblings and the beauty of that, I think, is really striking to me. I've taken a couple guys down to Florida to get top surgery, and then was their caretaker after. After I had my top surgery, we went down to the same surgeon and did the whole thing and made it kind of fun, as fun as you can make surgery. And I think there's just something really really beautiful about that, that you don't need to explain. There's no barriers to get through, because they're all still living it in a certain way. Not necessarily exactly the same, but you don't have to explain everything. So you can really just, I think, get deeper with a person quicker, because you're not learning the identity aspect of it. And I think in romantic relationships, T4T romantic relationship is just everything. I think there's also the not having to explain things. There's also shifts in identity aren't, in my experience, aren't life-shattering. Somebody's like, I actually want to try they-them pronouns. And it's just like, oh, okay. Or like, I think I'm going to cut my hair. It's like, okay. I think I'm going to grow my hair out. Okay. It's not a big deal where other relationships, it might be a big deal. And then having sex as a T4T couple, I think I've always it's kind of like a body meld, almost, where I don't know whose body is whose, and I kind of forget that I even have a body at a certain point. And it's just enjoyable, because there's no worrying about like, oh, I don't have this part, or I have this part, or whatever it is. It's not it's not as front and center. So I think that's yeah, a really beautiful thing. Really special. Yeah.

Silverman: Thank you for sharing that. Yeah. Thank you for sharing.

DeVuyst: I have something to add. Okay, so I was just thinking about my dad's funeral, and like how wild this experience was for me. He passed away in 2016, and you know, I wanted to look really nice for this service we were having, and so I got a really nice suit, and it was tailored, and the whole thing, and I looked very handsome, and people start showing up to this chapel, and we're greeting the people as they come in, and greeting my sister, like, hey, Jessie, hey, Adam, hey, Justin, and then they would get to me, and be like, I don't know who you are, and I remember my dad's cousin, my Uncle Kenny, literally looked me up and down, and was just like, who are you? And I was like, oh, I used to be Sarah, I go by Sawyer now, and he looked me up and down again, just standing in front of me, and it was very awkward, and he shook my hand, and he was like, alright, and then he just walked away, and I was like, okay, I guess that's fine. That didn't seem that bad, and that just kind of set the tone for what would happen all day,

because my mom had not told anybody that I had transitioned, so nobody knew who I was, and I would just look at people, and wave, thinking that they would know who I was, and then they would give me a weird look, and then come up to me later and be like, oh my god, I didn't realize that was you, and I was like, oh my god, what is happening? And it just happened over and over and over again.

It was such, yeah, it was such a mind-bending moment, and I had my best friend from high school, who I was in a band with, his mom had saw, she had seen the obituary in the paper, and came only to say hello, and I hadn't seen this woman in 15 years, probably. She had no idea that I had transitioned, you know, like, yeah, I hadn't seen her since I was like 17. And she ran in there, and I don't know how she knew my name, I just heard her from behind me screaming my name, Sawyer-Sawyer and I was like, oh my god, and I turned around, and she just gave me like the biggest hug, and was just like, I'm so sorry, I saw it in the paper, I have to go to work, so I can't stay, but I just wanted to come say how sorry I am, and and like, oh my god, you look great and I was like, oh my god and it was just like little moments of like, that I really needed, because the rest of it was like, a shit show, you know.

And then there was like this other family who are like right-wing extremists, like love their guns, like in the military, and heir son came up to m and like stood side-by-side with me, and this man is like six foot five, he's like a refrigerator, he's huge and he was like, well, you look a lot different, and I was like, yeah, and that was it, and then his dad came over and proceeded to like misgender me, and like call me my birth name, and just like be generally awful, and just like stare me down, and that was like the one that was like uncomfortable for me, because I felt a little unsafe.

But the other ones, like in retrospect, I find so funny, that my uncle was just like, who are you, you know, and like, I had seen him a couple weeks earlier in the hospital, and it was like, my brother Justin, my little sister Jessie, and me, and my other brother was not there, so my uncle Kenny comes in, and he's like, hey Justin, hey Jessie, hey Adam, so he thought that I was my brother. And my dad couldn't really see, so he was like, what are you talking about, that's Sarah. And my uncle Kenny was like, okay, you're crazy, like clearly, not all the, what are those things, like one crayon short of a crayon box, and then like continued to like talk to us, as if I was Adam. Like what are you up to Adam, and then I just like made up a story, because I didn't have it in me, to be like, oh "I'm actually Sawyer, and I transitioned" and it was just like, also not the time you know, my dad's dying, so let's leave it.

But that funeral was hilarious, and then at the end, my uncle Kenny, I hear him like talking to my mom, they're like arguing about something, I can't quite hear what they're talking about, but they're arguing about something, and then he leaves doesn't say anything. But we hear from outside, he like starts his car, so we go out to wave, and he waves out his window and he says "have a nice life" and then just drives away, and we've never heard from him since, yeah, it was a really strange day, a really strange day, yeah family yeah...My oldest sister was there the one who was murdered she was there and like ran across the chapel and was just like Sawyer, it's so good to see you, like da da da, so she was really accepting, it was just like, weird that nobody knew who I was.

Silverman: Yeah you know, yeah, I mean, it kind of reminds me of when you spoke of being invisibilized, at the club, just like all these different registers of how people contemplate their

own kind of insecurity or like inability to acknowledge somebody

DeVuyst: Yeah, totally

Silverman: And especially so intimately at a funeral. Yeah, wow, what a litmus test

DeVuyst: Yeah, it really was, that needs to be written into a script somewhere, that was wild.

Silverman: Thank you for sharing that, yeah.

DeVuyst: Yeah, you're welcome, yeah, families are very complicated, you know, yeah, I often get jealous and really sad when I see like parents really loving on their trans kids, being really proud of them for coming out as who they really are, and I'm just like so angry that like I don't have that, you know.

Silverman" But you get to be such a good friend to people that also need that kind of support too.

DeVuyst: Yeah...yeah.....yeah that's how I try to turn it around is just like being there for people who, in a way that like I didn't have that, you know, like taking care of my trans friends and caretaking them when they need it.

Silverman: That's the most nourishing thing you can do

DeVuyst: Yeah and that's kind of like healing me in a way as well, yeah.

Silverman: Well, thank you.

DeVuyst: You're welcome, thanks for having me.