

got the seven-year itch a little early," Bloomberg said. "I did try to spice things up for him. But he said, 'It's not you. It's me.'" The Mayor thanked Loeser for always giving his unvarnished opinion—"Sometimes a little varnish would have been O.K.," he added—and went on, "When Stu talked about leaving and starting his own company, I had two thoughts. One, I didn't want him to go, and, two, I didn't think that I'd have a year of dicking around to put up with, listening to him finally pull the plug." The Mayor read an official proclamation citing the dedication of Loeser, who "lived and breathed his job and worked tirelessly day and night, 24/6." (Loeser observes the Sabbath.) "As you know, I worked hard to write this proclamation," the Mayor said, adding, "Who wrote this shit?"

In his final farewell, Bloomberg reminisced about a moment of intimacy after a press conference. "I'm feeling good—I got the usual bullshit questions, I didn't screw up, I'm feeling no pain," the Mayor recalled. "I get into the car. Stu turns to me and starts screaming at me, 'You stupid—,' 'You no good—,' and you could see the two detectives up front look at each other. They had never seen anybody, particularly the Mayor, being treated this way. What did I do wrong? I didn't screw up. It was some stupid little thing he wanted me to say, and I forgot to say it."

Loeser, at the Mayor's side for the last time, interjected. "I wanted you to say that the graveyards are full of irreplaceable people," he said, animatedly. "The question was: Are we doomed to irrelevance after Dan Doctoroff left? And *now* you get it."

—Rebecca Mead

TRANSPORTATION DEPT. RUSH



Like many formerly dicey aspects of life in New York City, riding a bicycle has, in recent years, been undergoing a government-sponsored sanitization. In place of dashes through traffic, there are cruises down painted bike lanes and, coming next spring, a fleet of communal bikes,

sponsored by Citibank. But New York is not Paris yet. A new movie, called "Premium Rush," serves as a helpful reminder. The film, a chase movie directed by David Koepp, portrays the Manhattan streetscape as a battle zone—a jumble of taxis, pedestrians, vendors, and delivery trucks, whose collisions and near-misses are punctuated by screaming confrontations ("Hey, watch it!" "Asshole!"). The film's hero, a bike messenger played by Joseph Gordon-Levitt, visualizes crashes as he zooms along. Turn left: cause a pileup. Turn right: run over a baby carriage. "Premium Rush" shows it all, complete with bone-crunching sound effects.

Austin Horse, a bike messenger who did stunts for the film, said that its portrayal of the job is, for the most part, accurate. On a bike, he said, "you're really responsible for what's going to happen to you." The golden word is "anticipate." These tips were not theoretical. Horse, who has a wiry build and was wearing a Red Bull cap, had agreed to take a guest with him on his morning rounds. A little after 9:30 A.M., he got a call from his dispatcher, summoning him for a pickup. Triple rush.

The pickup was at 240 East Houston. Horse was at Time's Up, the Williamsburg bike collective, where he lives. He got on his bike and, apologizing for rudeness, sped over the Williamsburg Bridge, leaving his guest, on a borrowed bike, to huff along in his wake. Up Clinton Street—around double-parked cars and construction cones—she found him again, in the honking chaos of East Houston. He had his package: a manila envelope. The envelope's destination was near MOMA, but Horse wanted to see if there was more work in the area. "I'm only holding one"—package—he said, "and that's not very efficient." But when he stopped on Astor Place to check in with his dispatcher, an industry veteran named Bob, at Quick Trak Messenger Service, he was told, "Get rid of it."

Hopping back on his bike, he veered into Fourth Avenue, cutting off several taxis. They leaned on their horns, which was apparently a good sign: "If they honk at you, that means they know you're there." Turning left on Twenty-first Street, around an unloading UPS truck, he headed up toward Sixth Avenue, where restaurant deliverymen whizzed

past, ringing bike bells. At Forty-third Street, there was a near-crash. Some double-parked cars blocked a Volvo—an out-of-towner, Horse suspected—that was attempting to make a left. The Volvo hesitated, and a speeding FedEx truck behind it slammed on the brakes. There were shouts. Horse offered a safety lesson: "Legally, we're supposed to be on the far left or far right. But it's safer and makes more sense to ride in the middle of the avenue, at the same speed as the cars."

Horse dropped the envelope off at a law firm called Katz & Matz, at 1350 Sixth Avenue. He made a call: "I'm clear." The next stop was Joie, a fashion company on West Fortieth Street. Before fax machines and the Internet, people sent documents via bike messenger, and the trade was more robust. Now, Horse said, he spends most of his time ferrying swag between fashion companies and the press—"Samples, bribes. The whole world of journalism is kind of corrupt." On Fifth Avenue, an armored vehicle blocked the bus lane, and his guest found herself bellowing, "Coming through!" Pedestrians gawked. "You're picking it up," Horse said, and continued on to Saks Direct, on West Twenty-fourth Street, where he waited for an elevator, covered in sweat. Upstairs, women in cubicles typed amid racks of clothes. Horse acknowledged the upstairs-downstairs dynamic: "I'm, like, a young white guy, so it's not really a problem for me, but did you notice we're taking mostly freight elevators?" Worst part of the job? "Waiting for elevators. That and rain." Best part? "Making money, flowing through traffic."

After stops at Credit Suisse, at 11 Madison Avenue, and on West Twentieth Street, Horse had dropped off three packages. (A typical commission for a New York bike messenger is eight dollars per single-package run.) It had started raining, and his guest's enthusiasm waned. Down Nineteenth Street, around a delivery van, and across the traffic of Seventh Avenue, he arrived at the Quick Trak offices, on Seventeenth Street. The tall guy in a tank top, talking on a phone, was Bob. Bob nodded. "This is it," Horse said, but he couldn't stay. Hoisting his messenger bag onto his shoulder, he shouted, "See you guys!" and headed back out.

—Lizzie Widdicombe