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Student Revision

Revised from the audit questions - 406 words

What changed

The student kept the same setting and experience, narrowed the essay to one repair, added a truthful later behavior, and rewrote every sentence in their own voice.

The Bike Cooperative

The chain shifted cleanly on the repair stand. On the alley test, it jumped again.

I wheeled the blue commuter bike back inside while its owner checked the time. She had a morning shift across town, and for the past week a broken bike had turned her commute into two bus rides. I wanted to tell her the repair was finished. Instead, I admitted that I had missed something and asked for twenty more minutes.

At the Eastside Bike Cooperative, I had learned repairs as a sequence: inspect the chain, adjust the derailleur, test the cable. That sequence had worked on the stand. Luis, one of the mechanics, asked me to watch the rear wheel while he pressed down on the pedal. Under weight, the wheel shifted slightly in its dropout. The derailleur was not the whole problem; I had diagnosed the part I knew best.

We reseated the wheel, tightened the axle, and tested the bike again. This time the gears held. The owner rode a loop around the block, returned smiling, and left for work. The repair was ordinary. What stayed with me was how confidently I had stopped looking once I found a familiar answer.

I started keeping a small notebook in my apron. For each stubborn repair, I wrote down the first explanation I considered and what the actual problem turned out to be. A brake rub that looked like a bent rotor came from a loose hub. A recurring flat was not bad luck but a shard hidden in the tire lining. My notes became a record of assumptions, especially my own.

The notebook changed how I help newer volunteers. Instead of taking the wrench from them, I ask what evidence would prove their diagnosis wrong. We test one idea at a time. The process is slower at first, but it gives them ownership of the repair and makes both of us more careful.

I arrived at the cooperative because I needed service hours and liked working with my hands. I stayed because repair taught me a more demanding kind of problem-solving: not simply finding an answer, but noticing when I am too eager for one. Engineering appeals to me for the same reason. The systems may be larger than a bicycle, but I want to bring the same habit with me - test the familiar explanation, look for what changes under pressure, and keep listening when the first answer seems complete.