HOW TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR MONEY
AND FINALLY GET AHEAD

WHERE DID ALL THE MONEY GO?

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Welcome

If you’re reading this, you probably recognised something in one of my social media posts

I’m delighted you’re here.

This preview contains the opening chapter of my Book *Where Did All the Money Go?* I hope it helps you see money a little differently.

Enjoy

Jaeneen

Chapter One

Modern Money and the Fog We Live In

'The most obvious [and] important realities are often the ones that

are hardest to see…'

~ David Wallace

The Automatic Millionaire

David Bach points out that 'there are thousands and thousands of books about money, [and] they all promise to teach you how to get rich.' He then goes on to add his own book, *The Automatic Millionaire*. One important distinction between his book and many others, is that his became a runaway bestseller, staying on numerous best-seller lists for many months. It was published in 2004, and I remember it as the first time I encountered the term 'Pay Yourself First.'

Bach's book is excellent and I highly recommend it. In a really small nutshell, its premise is this: Pay Yourself First and then automate various aspects of your finances — such as investment contributions and mortgage pre-payments — so the system works for you without requiring constant attention or discipline. As the name suggests, Paying Yourself First means setting aside a portion of your earnings before anything else. There's more to this book of course, but that's the spine of it.

You won't hear any arguments from me about this strategy; I agree entirely. The question I would ask is: if it is that simple, why aren't more people doing it? Not just more people, but a lot more. And why aren't they rich? If the answer were simply education or effort, the problem would've been solved by now.

There must be something else stopping us from taking this action. Not a lack of information, or even motivation, but some kind of friction that operates beneath our conscious awareness, a quiet resistance rooted in our behaviour, identity, and habits. Something in how we're made. Something in how we see money, in how the world sees us as consumers, and in how we've learned to see ourselves as participants in the economy.

What would happen if we saw ourselves differently? If we could perceive how money flows through our lives, both consciously and unconsciously? If we were aware of the forces, both visible and invisible, accidental and intentional, that shape how we view and handle money? Once those forces are understood, outcomes like paying ourselves first, automating savings and investments, and preparing for uncertainty, cease to be matters of foresight or willpower. They become matters of reflex by design. If you could see money this way, your focus would shift away from chasing outcomes through discipline and turn instead toward building systems that align with your behaviour. If you could do that, you'd find yourself able to build a system from which something like an *Automatic Millionaire* could reasonably emerge.

The Modern Fog

Most people don't lose control of their money in a single, dramatic moment. There's no specific bad decision, no reckless splurge, no obvious turning point. What happens is quieter than that. Money slips out of view, gradually, invisibly, until one day you're earning more than you ever thought you would, yet somehow feeling less certain, less settled, less ahead. If you've ever looked at your income and thought, *I should be further along than this*, you're not alone. And more importantly, you're not broken.

Over the last thirty years or so, something fundamental has changed in the way money moves through our lives. Spending used to be tangible. It demanded attention. You could see it leaving your hands. Today, the movement of money is faster, quieter, and harder to notice. It no longer asks for your awareness, and that's a problem. This is the modern fog.

The fog isn't about irresponsibility or poor discipline. It's not caused by indulgence or a lack of financial knowledge. It's the result of living inside systems designed to make spending effortless, automatic, and largely invisible. When money becomes something you no longer *experience*, it becomes almost impossible to manage, even for capable, intelligent, high-earning people. I've seen this pattern repeat itself across every level of income. I've watched families on modest wages build remarkable security, and I've sat at kitchen tables with six-figure earners who feel anxious about money for the first time in their lives. The difference is rarely income. It's visibility.

This isn't about fixing your finances. It's about restoring your vision. Because once you can see clearly again, everything that follows becomes possible.

The Disappearing Friction of Money

When I began my career in finance, money moved at a human pace. Spending required intention. If you wanted to buy something meaningful, you had to plan for it. You withdrew cash, you waited, you handled the notes. Each transaction left a physical trace, not just in your wallet, but in your awareness. You *felt* the money leaving your hands.

That friction mattered more than we realised at the time. It acted as a natural braking system. As your cash ran low, your behaviour adjusted automatically. Spending slowed, not because of discipline or budgeting, but because the signal was impossible to ignore.

Over the last few decades, that friction has been systematically removed.

Today, the distance between desire and purchase has collapsed. Tap-and-go. One-click ordering. Stored cards. Facial recognition. Money now moves faster than reflection. You can buy something, receive confirmation, and feel satisfaction, all without registering the cost in any meaningful way.

Behavioural economists Drazen Prelec and George Loewenstein describe this phenomenon as the *pain of paying*: the brief psychological discomfort we experience when we part with money. Their research shows that when payment is physical and tangible, the signal is strong. When payment becomes digital and abstract, the signal weakens or even disappears altogether. We experience the reward of the purchase without the resistance of the cost. This isn't an accident. It's a design (something we'll unpack more fully later).

Over time, that absence of feedback slowly changes behaviour. Spending becomes less deliberate. Decisions blur into habits. And eventually, money stops feeling like something we're actively directing, and starts feeling like something that simply... moves. This is how the fog thickens. Not through excess, but through speed. Not through ignorance, but invisibility.

The Subscriptionisation of Everything

Once spending became invisible, it didn't take long for the system to adapt. Modern commerce is no longer built around single decisions. It's built around **default behaviour**. The most valuable customer today isn't the one who actively chooses, it's the one who stops noticing.

For most of my career, the exchange of goods and services was a straightforward transaction; you paid, you received, and the relationship ended. But over the past decade, that model quietly inverted. We have moved into what I think of as the *subscriptionisation of everything. M*usic, television, software, fitness, food, even things that once required effort now arrive automatically, paid for in the background. I call these charges *ghost transactions*. They don't announce themselves; they don't demand attention. They drift through your account month after month, barely registering, rarely remembered - because each one feels too small to matter. Seven dollars here, fifteen there. Nothing worth dealing with today. This is where the fog is stealthiest. These charges are ninjas: hard to cancel, designed to disappear into the background, quietly auto-renewing while your attention is elsewhere. From the company's perspective, this is elegant, predictable, efficient, and in most cases, highly profitable. For consumers and from your perspective, it creates a new kind of financial blind spot.

Individually, these amounts feel insignificant. Collectively, they shape your financial reality. A handful of forgotten subscriptions can quietly redirect thousands of dollars a year, money that never feels *spent*, because it was never consciously chosen in the first place. The trap isn't indulgence, it's indifference. When spending happens without attention, it bypasses intention entirely. And over long periods of time, that absence of awareness compounds, not just financially, but psychologically. Money starts to feel like something that leaks rather than something you direct. This is not you failing, it's a natural outcome when modern systems are designed to exploit you for forgetting.

The Convenience Tax

As income rises, people don't necessarily buy *bigger* or *better* things, they buy *easier* ones. We now live in a point-and-click world, where almost every task that once required effort has been smoothed, outsourced, or automated. Food arrives without cooking. Groceries appear without any effort to search the aisles. Entertainment starts without choosing. Even minor inconveniences can be removed with a swipe. This is what I call the **convenience tax**.

At first, it feels entirely rational. We tell ourselves we're paying for convenience so we can focus on more important things: our work, our families, our careers. And in a narrow sense, that's true. Convenience does save time, but it also charges interest. The first cost is obvious: delivery fees, service charges, mark-ups quietly built into the price. The second cost is harder to see. Because spending is frictionless, habits expand without negotiation. What begins as an occasional treat invisibility slides into a routine. Once-a-week becomes four-times-a-week because nothing interrupts the pattern.

There's a subtle psychological trap at work here. When we justify convenience using our own 'hourly rate,' we assume the time we save will be used productively. But in practice, that hour often dissolves. It gets spent scrolling, switching off, or recovering from the day. We aren't always buying time. More often, we're buying relief. After long days filled with decisions, negotiations, and responsibility, the appetite for effort drops. This is not a moral issue: it's pragmatically predictable. When mental energy runs low, we default to the path of least resistance. This is why willpower is such an unreliable strategy. Wealth isn't built by trying harder at the end of the day. It's built by designing systems that continue to work when you're tired; when attention is low, patience is thin, and friction feels heavier than it should.

The fog doesn't thicken because you make bad choices. It thickens because easy choices stop feeling like choices at all.

The Loyalty Tax

This is where experience matters. In the modern financial landscape, loyalty is no longer rewarded. It's quietly **monetised**. Across mortgages, insurance, utilities, and everyday financial products, institutions have learned something uncomfortable but reliable: most people don't switch. Not because they're careless, but because switching takes time, attention, and energy, all of which are already in short supply. The system is built around that reality. Rates are adjusted gradually. Fees creep upward. Discounts are reserved for 'new customers,' while long-standing ones are left on default settings. Nothing dramatic happens. There's no alert, no moment that demands action. The change is slow enough to stay beneath the surface, especially when everything else in life feels louder and more urgent.

Within finance circles, this is what's known as the **loyalty tax**. I've seen it cost households thousands of dollars a year simply through quiet inaction. Not reviewing a product doesn't feel like a choice, but financially, it is treated as one. Algorithms don't recognise tenure, goodwill, or history. They only register behaviour. If nothing changes, the system assumes everything is acceptable. Here too, this is not a question of laziness, but rather of systemic design. Paperwork. Phone calls. Comparison fatigue. The sheer effort of dealing with it all creates just enough resistance to keep things exactly as they are. And over time, that resistance becomes expensive.

The fog plays an important role here. When increases are incremental and automatic, money leaves your account without ever feeling questioned. You're not actively agreeing to pay more, you're simply not being given a reason to notice that you already are. This is why it's so vital to be aware of it: money reclaimed from the loyalty tax doesn't require sacrifice, discipline, or lifestyle change. It simply requires seeing what's been happening in the background, and recognising that 'staying put' has a price.

The Financial Mirror

I often ask clients a simple question: *If your bank account were a business, and you were the CEO, would you fire yourself?*

Most people laugh, usually a little nervously. Not because they're careless, but because they've never really looked at their finances that way before. The truth is most of us don't actively manage our money. We inherit habits and, and we accept defaults. We become **accidental spenders**.

Changing the future starts with observation. Before anything can be redesigned, it must be seen. I want you to think of this as a **Wealth Reclamation Project**. We aren't hunting for mistakes or failures. We're looking for *found money*. If you spotted a $50 note on the footpath, you wouldn't feel guilty, you'd pick it up. Your bank statement is often scattered with those same $50 notes, just disguised as digital line items that have faded into the background.

This is the shift we're aiming for: from the **Default Life**, where spending happens automatically and prices are accepted without question, to the **Designed Life**, where money reflects intention rather than habit.

This isn't about deprivation. I'm not interested in telling you to give up the small pleasures that make life enjoyable. The work here is more purposeful than that. It's about removing unconscious waste: the spending that doesn't truly serve you. Every dollar recovered from the fog becomes a dollar you can direct toward what matters most to you.

Clarity doesn't demand perfection. It just asks you to start looking.

The Reclamation Project: A Forty-Eight-Hour Momentum Reset

Clarity without movement fades quickly. To close this chapter, I want to offer a short, low-pressure reset. It's an invitation, not a homework assignment. Think of it as turning the lights on, briefly, just to see what's already there.

1. The ‘Zombie’ Sweep (15 minutes): Open the subscriptions section on your phone. Find one service you haven’t used in the past month and cancel it. No debate. No optimisation. Just take one small win.

2. The ‘Convenience’ Reality Check (10 minutes): Scroll through last month’s transactions and add up delivery fees and service charges. Don’t judge the number. Simply notice it.

3. The ‘Loyalty Tax’ Glance (5 minutes): Pick one utility or insurance bill. If it hasn’t been reviewed in the past year, make a small mark next to it - a reminder that this is something to return to later.

That’s it. You’re not fixing anything yet. You’re becoming an observer. It’s in that shift, from passive participant to active witness, that momentum begins.

Chapter 1: Key Takeaways

- **The problem isn’t discipline - it’s visibility**. Modern money is designed to move quickly and quietly, bypassing the natural signals that once helped us stay aware of our spending
- **What goes unnoticed still has consequences.** Small, forgotten outflows don’t feel significant in the moment, but over time they quietly shape your financial future.
- **Drift, not excess, is the real threat.** Most financial leakage doesn’t come from big mistakes. It comes from habits and defaults that are never consciously revisited.
- **Clarity changes the game.** You aren’t ‘bad with money.’ You’ve been operating in a fog. The moment you begin to see clearly, you regain choice - and with it, control.

You’ve just cleared the fog. For perhaps the first time, you aren’t simply letting life happen to your bank account, and your broader financial future. You’re observing it. That shift, from Passive Consumer to Active Observer, is where everything begins.

Enjoyed the journey so far?

The first chapter is just the beginning.

Inside *Where Did All the Money Go?* you'll discover practical ideas to help you:

✓ **Find the Tiny Leaks**
Discover the everyday habits and hidden spending patterns that quietly drain your wealth.

✓ **Understand Behavioural Finance**
Learn why smart people still make costly money decisions—and how to change those patterns.

✓ **Build Your Freedom Fortress**
Create a simple financial structure that gives your money purpose, direction and resilience.

✓ **Invest with Confidence**
Understand the principles behind long-term wealth building without relying on predictions or hype.

✓ **Create Lasting Financial Momentum**
Replace financial stress with clarity, confidence and habits that compound over time.

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