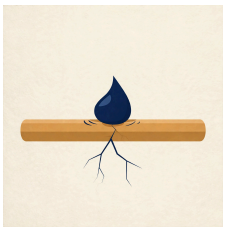
CHAPTER 1

The $1 now or $10 later math

Deferred maintenance does not save money. It borrows money - from your future self, at terrible rates, with the due date chosen by the failure.



Job	Planned	Emergency
Water heater: flush yearly, replace at year 10 on your date	$1,400	$2,300+
Slow drain cleared on a weekday visit	$150	$450
Caulk and exterior paint touch-up, one afternoon	$120	$1,800
Furnace serviced in September	$140	$600+
Gutter cleaning, twice a year	$300/yr	$2,500+



Illustrative planning figures. The pattern matters more than the prices: emergency work adds an after-hours premium, a rushed parts run, and whatever the water, heat, or rot damaged while you waited.

NOTE:
A $150 weekday drain cleaning becomes a $450 emergency — plus the turnover when a good tenant leaves.

Read the last column again, then add the cost nobody puts on the invoice: **a good tenant who leaves**. One turnover - vacancy, cleaning, repaint, re-leasing - easily runs $2,000 to $4,000 on a $1,400 unit. Tenants rarely leave over rent. They leave over the drip nobody fixed, the heat that failed twice, the repair that took three weeks. Chapter 13 does that math in full.

The rule: any repair you can see coming gets scheduled within 30 days, at regular rates, while it is still the cheap version of itself. "Watch it" is a decision too - write down what you are watching and the date you will re-check it.