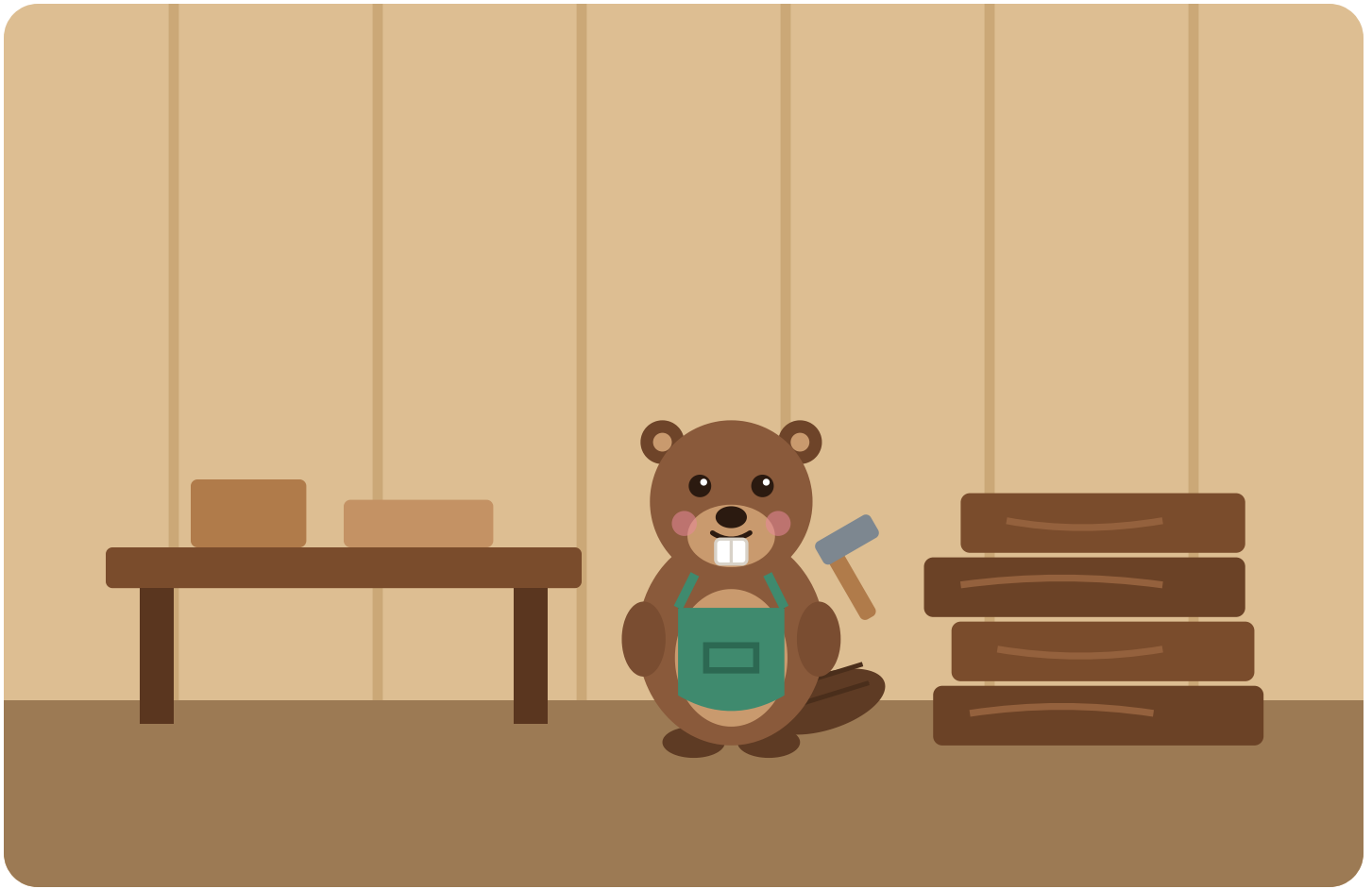




The Roof Before the Rains

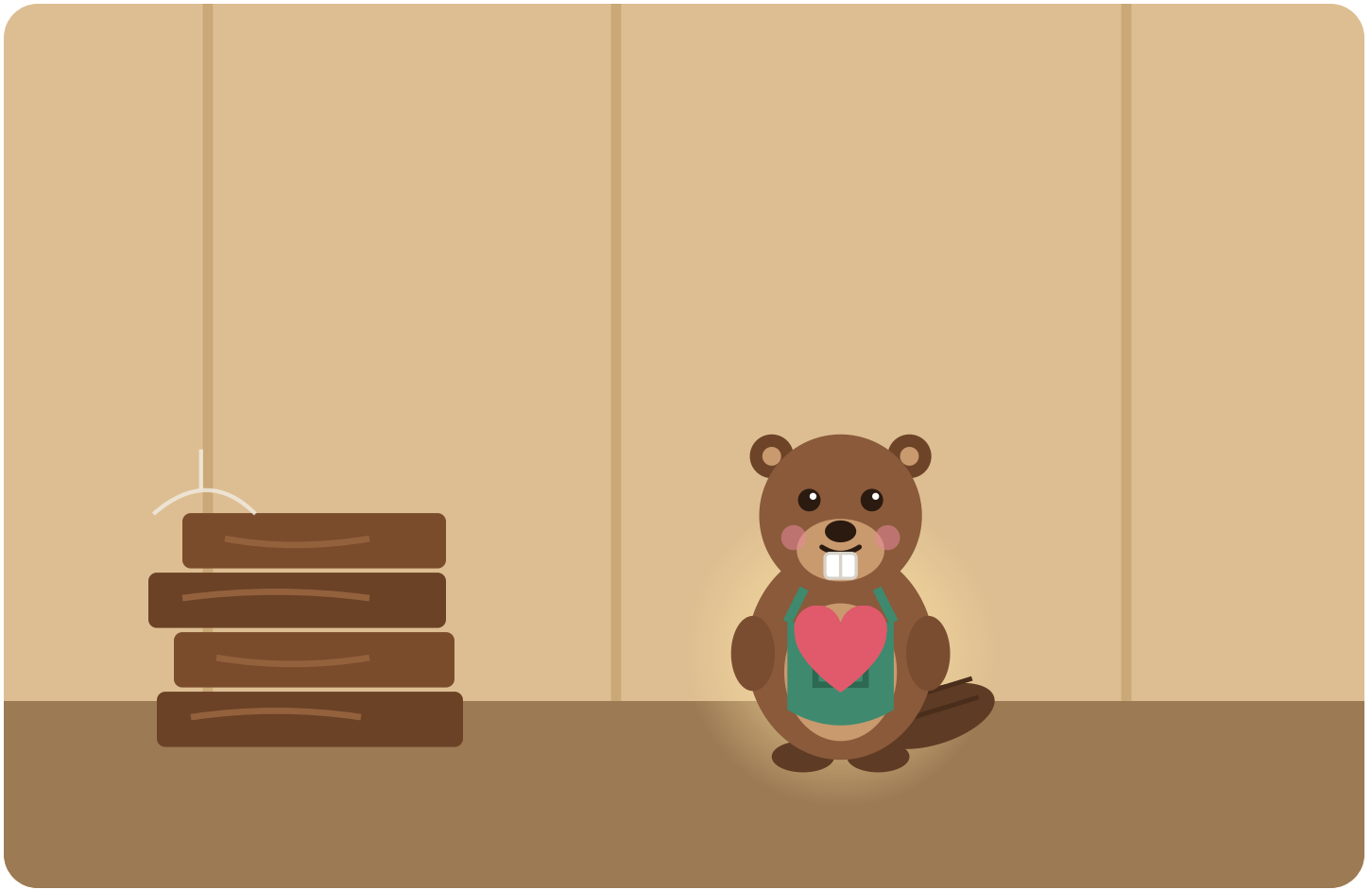
A story about two kinds of promises



Mara the beaver loved to build. In the corner of her shop sat a stack of beautiful walnut boards.



Every winter, Mara made a promise to herself: “This year, I will build my walnut table.”



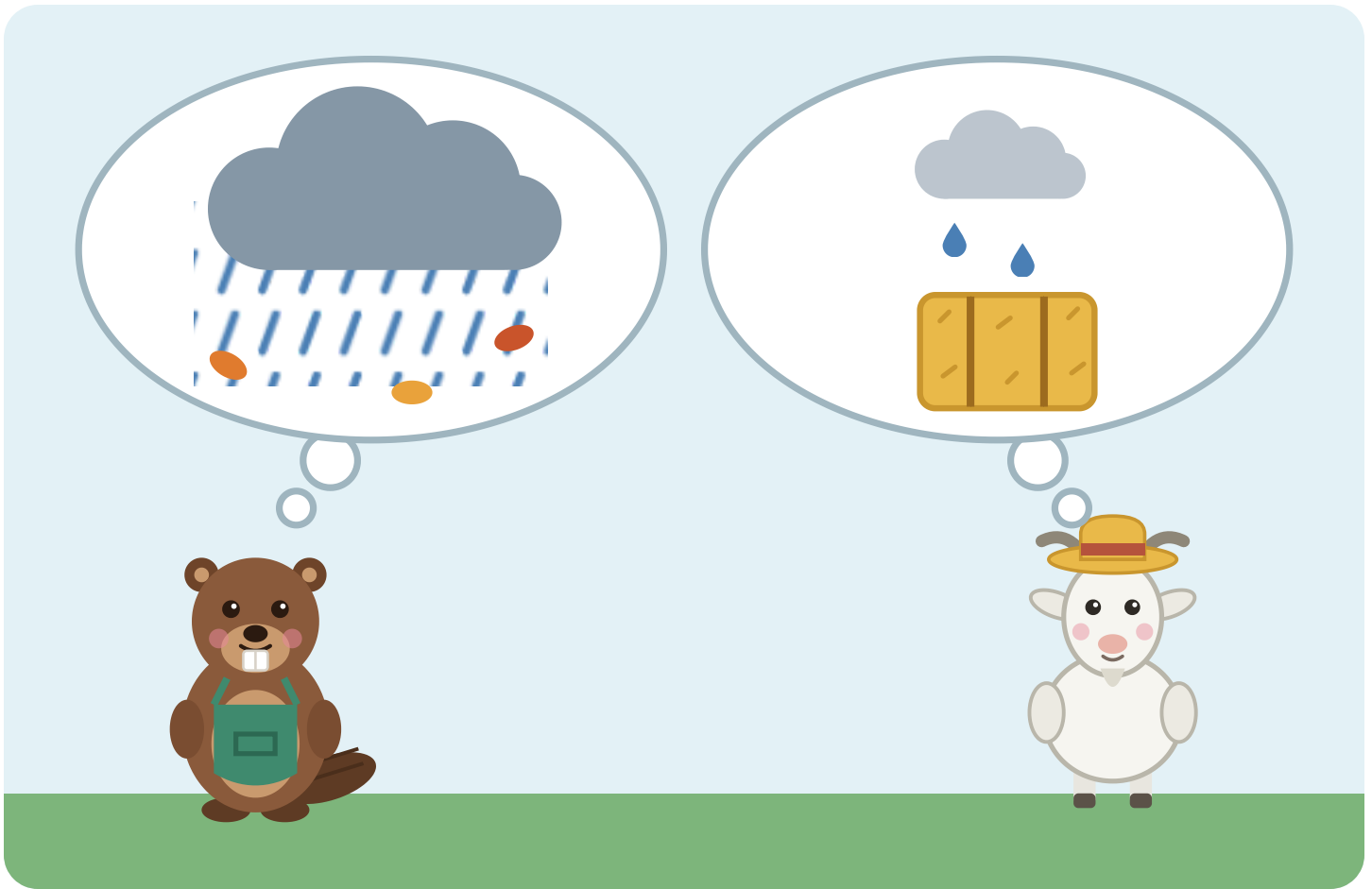
When winter ended and the table wasn't built, Mara wasn't upset. "I know I meant to," she said. "I'll do it next year."

Only Mara had to know what Mara meant. That's how a promise to yourself works.

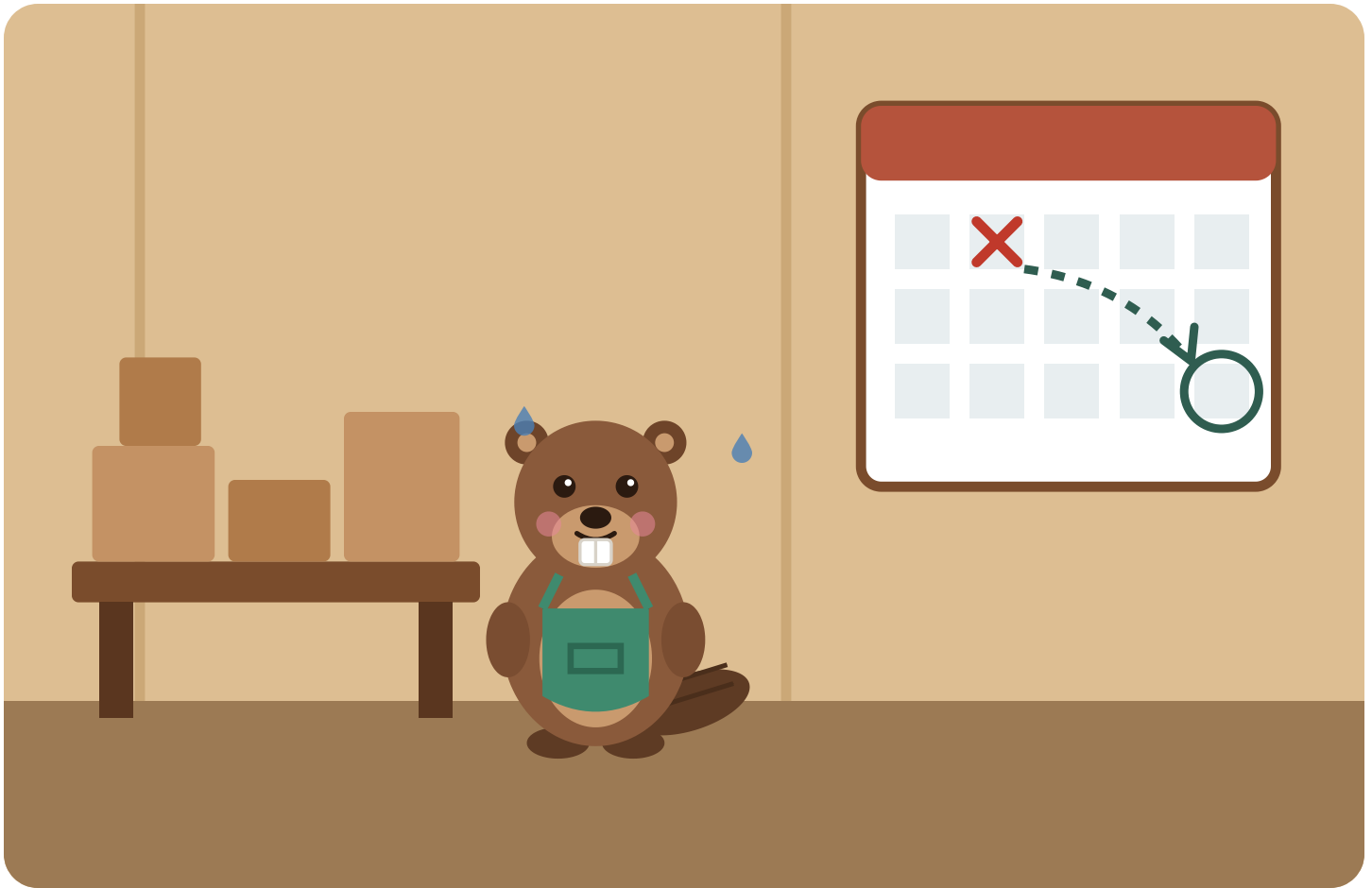


One summer day, Tom the goat came knocking. “My shed roof leaks,” he said. “Could you fix it before the rains?”

“Of course!” said Mara. They shook on it.



But they didn't picture the same thing. Mara pictured the big storms of late fall. Tom pictured the very first rain, right when his hay goes into the shed.



Summer got busy. Mara meant to fix the roof. She thought about it every day.

And just like with her walnut table, she quietly moved the day in her head. She didn't tell Tom.



Then the first rain came. Drip. Drip. Drip.

Tom's hay got soggy. Now Tom and his little kids would have less to eat all winter.



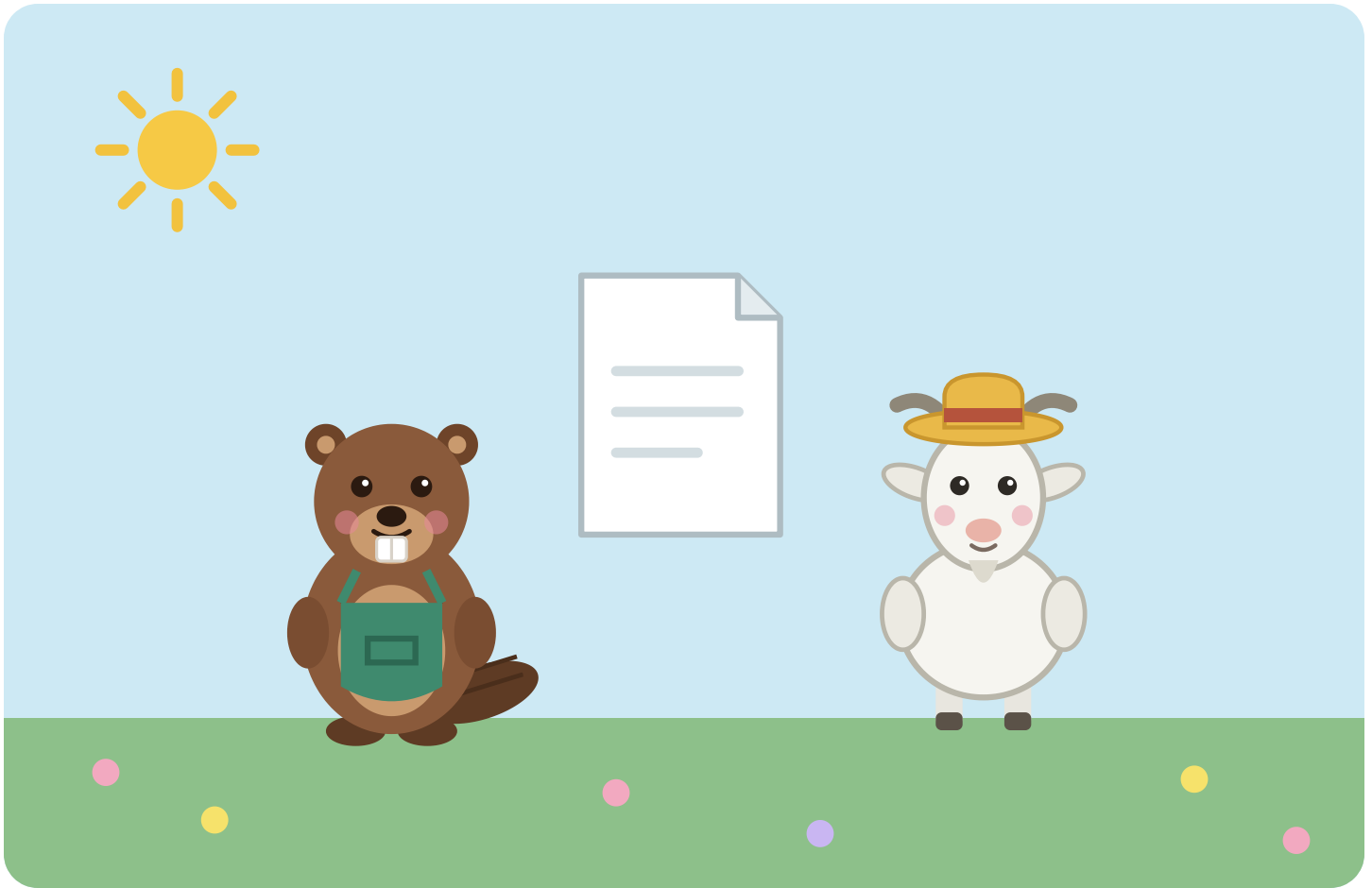
“But I meant to!” said Mara.

Tom couldn’t see what Mara meant. He could only see his wet hay.



They argued and argued. So they asked Ruth the owl, who was fair to everyone.

Ruth asked just one question: “What did you write down?” Nothing. And Ruth couldn’t see inside anybody’s head.



Next spring, Tom came back. The roof still needed fixing.

This time, Mara got out a sheet of paper. “Let’s write it so anyone could read it,” she said.

Who brings the shingles?

What if it rains early?

When does your hay come in?

How much time do you really have?



They asked each other hard questions. It felt a little like arguing, but this time they were arguing about the paper, not about each other.

Mara was honest about how much time she really had. Promising more would just be breaking the promise early.

Our Promise

Tom brings the shingles
by **August 5.**

Mara finishes the roof
by **September 15.**



They wrote it all down. Nothing on the paper said what anyone meant. It said what each of them would do, and when.



Then each of them did their own part. Tom brought the shingles on time. Mara fixed the roof.

Nobody told the other one how to do their job.



When the first rain came that fall, the hay stayed dry.
And Mara and Tom were good neighbors again.



to yourself



to a friend

A promise to yourself lives in your heart. A promise to a friend lives where both of you can see it.

And Mara's walnut table? It still isn't built. But that promise is just for her.

The End