

HOW DOES
TOOTHPASTE
GET INTO THE
TUBE?



The year was 1870. New London, Connecticut, United States. 7 am. Kids were tumbling out of bed, their mothers hurrying them to clean their teeth, handing them tooth sticks and jars of toothpaste.



What?

Did I just say – “Toothsticks”?

That’s right. They used toothsticks to clean their teeth back in 1870. A toothstick was simply a twig with a frayed end. Some lucky kids had twigs with boar hair tied to one end for that extra shine.



And what was that other thing I said?
“Jars of toothpaste”?

That’s right. Toothpaste tubes were not invented yet. They only had jars.
And every bleary eyed kid started their day by dipping a toothstick into a
porcelain jar filled with toothpaste.



Actually, into the *same* porcelain jar that *every other* member of the family dipped their toothstick into. Including that visiting grand aunt with yellow and black teeth, whose toothstick matched her teeth.



One morning, a disgusted cry went up in a dentist's house.
“Ewwwwwwwwww!”

It was Dr. Sheffield's son Lucius, who refused to dip into the jar anymore and decided to use tooth powder henceforth. But a thought remained in his mind – there must be a better way to use toothpaste.

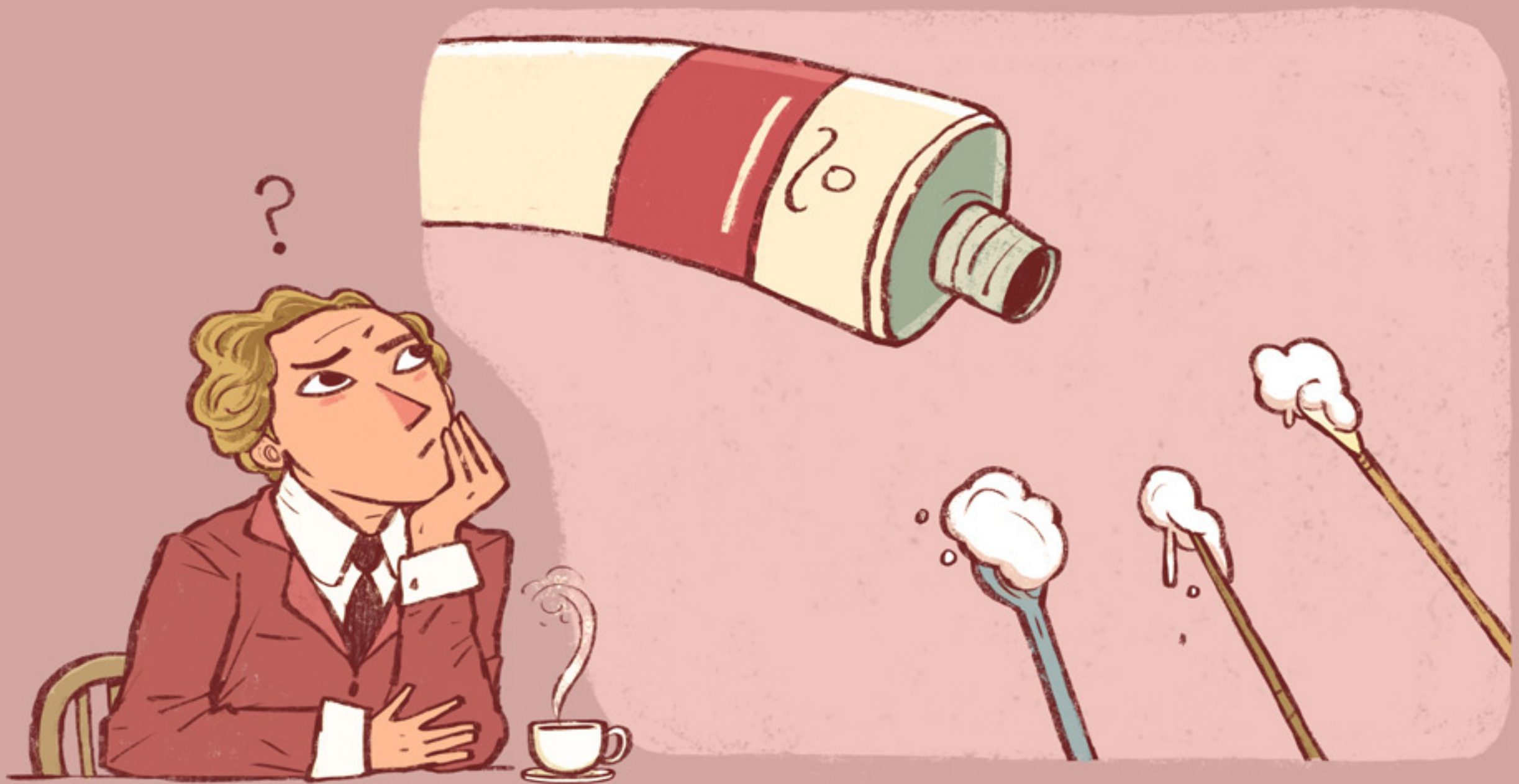


A few years later, Lucius went to Paris to study the science of dentistry. There, he saw artists squeezing paint from metal tubes on to their paintbrushes. Why couldn't the same type of tube be used to hold toothpaste?! He rushed back home and shared this idea with his father, who thought that it was just totally awesome.

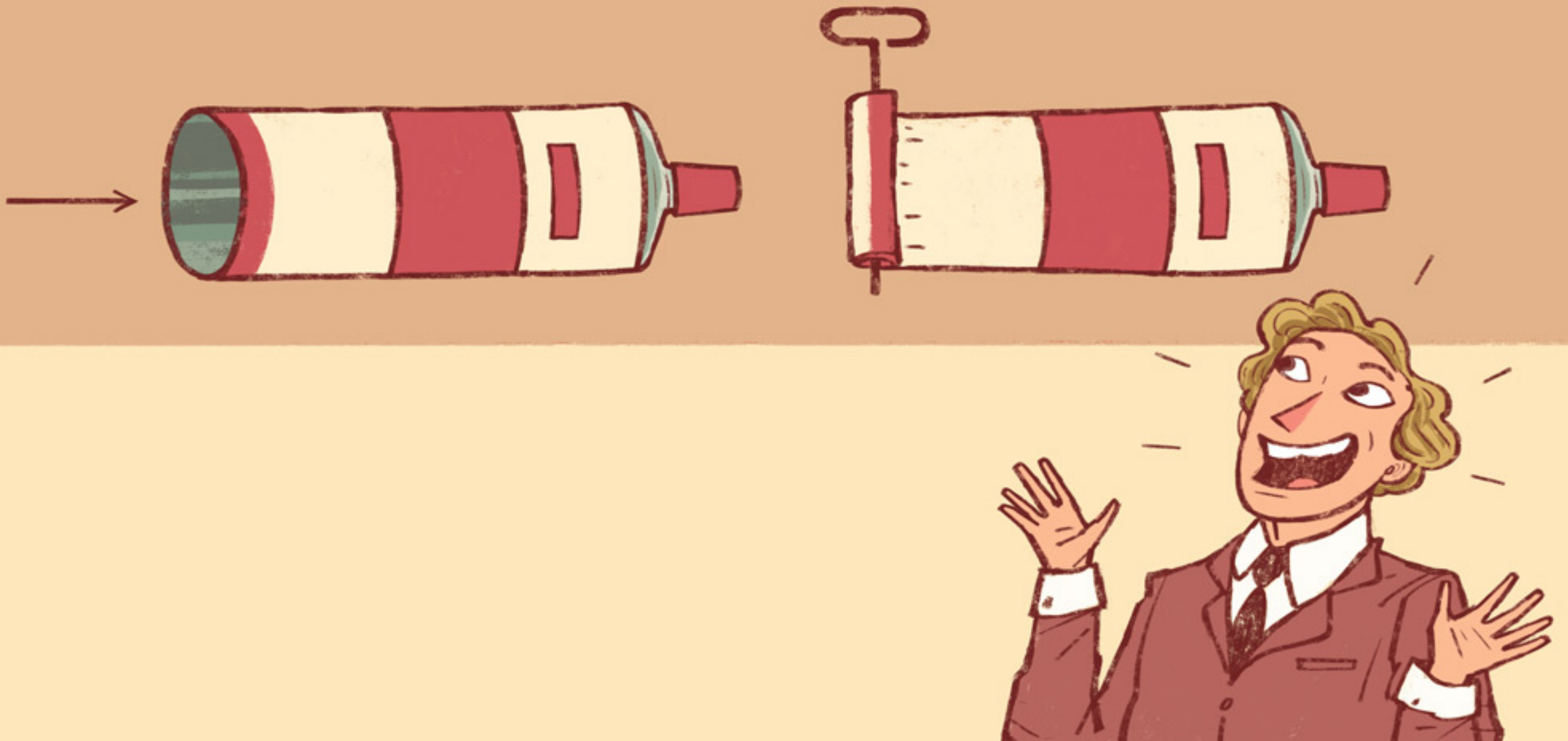


There was just that little matter of figuring out how to get the toothpaste into the tube. How would you go about it? Have you had a bad morning when you squeezed way too much paste in your half asleep comatose state? And you wake up with a snap because there's toothpaste all over the sink and your mother is reminding you that the school bus will be at the doorstep in twenty minutes, and the last thing you want is for her to flip when she sees the mess you've made.

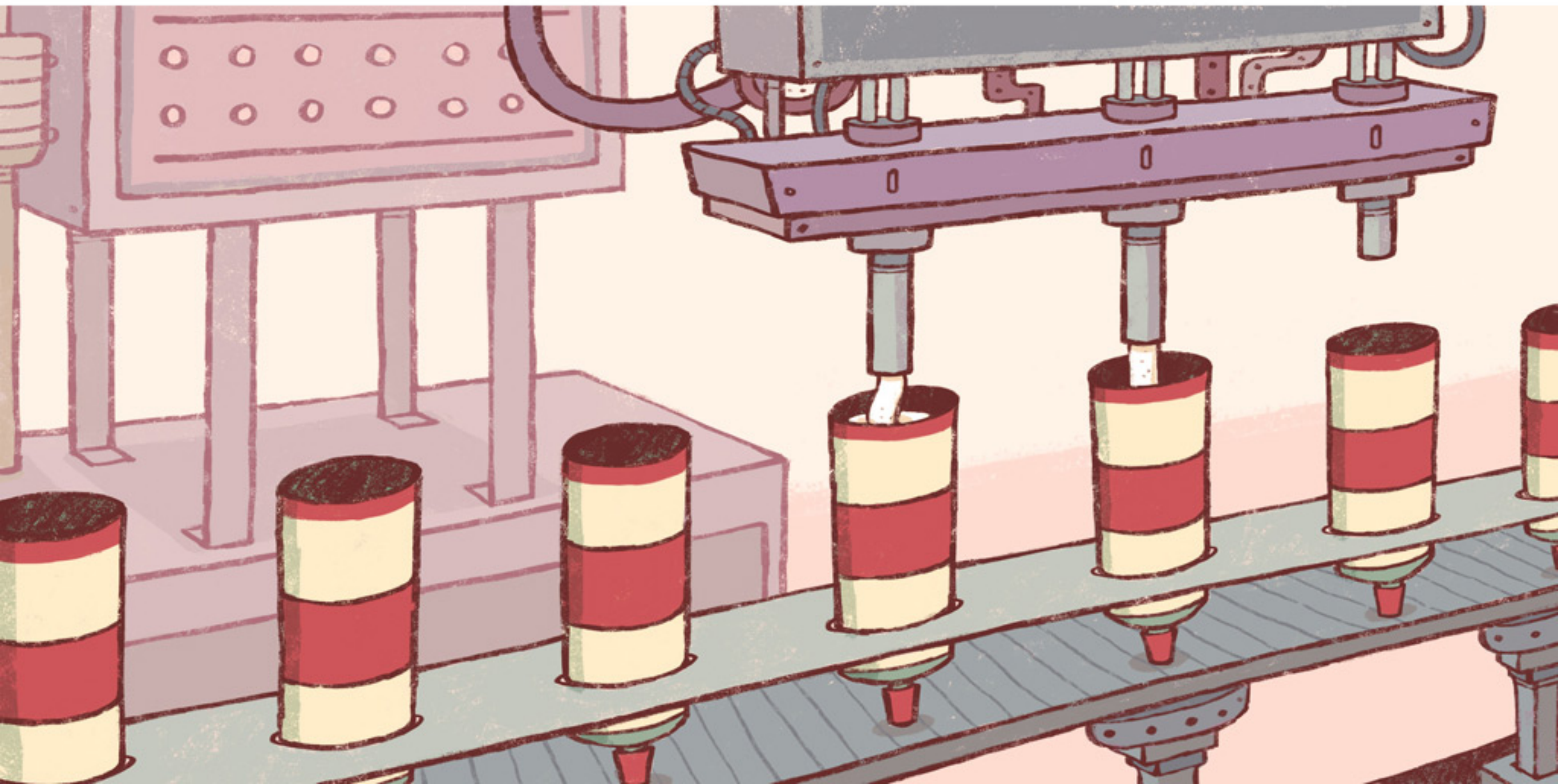
Thinking of using an ear bud? Or a really tiny spoon? How about a toothpick?



It was not as messy as you'd expect, because the way Dr. Sheffield and his team did it was without opening the cap! That's right, they kept the cap screwed on tight, and opened up the other end! It's definitely easier to fill a tube from the larger end, especially if you have something to pump the paste with, like a syringe. After that, all you have to do is seal the end tight so that the paste will not leak.

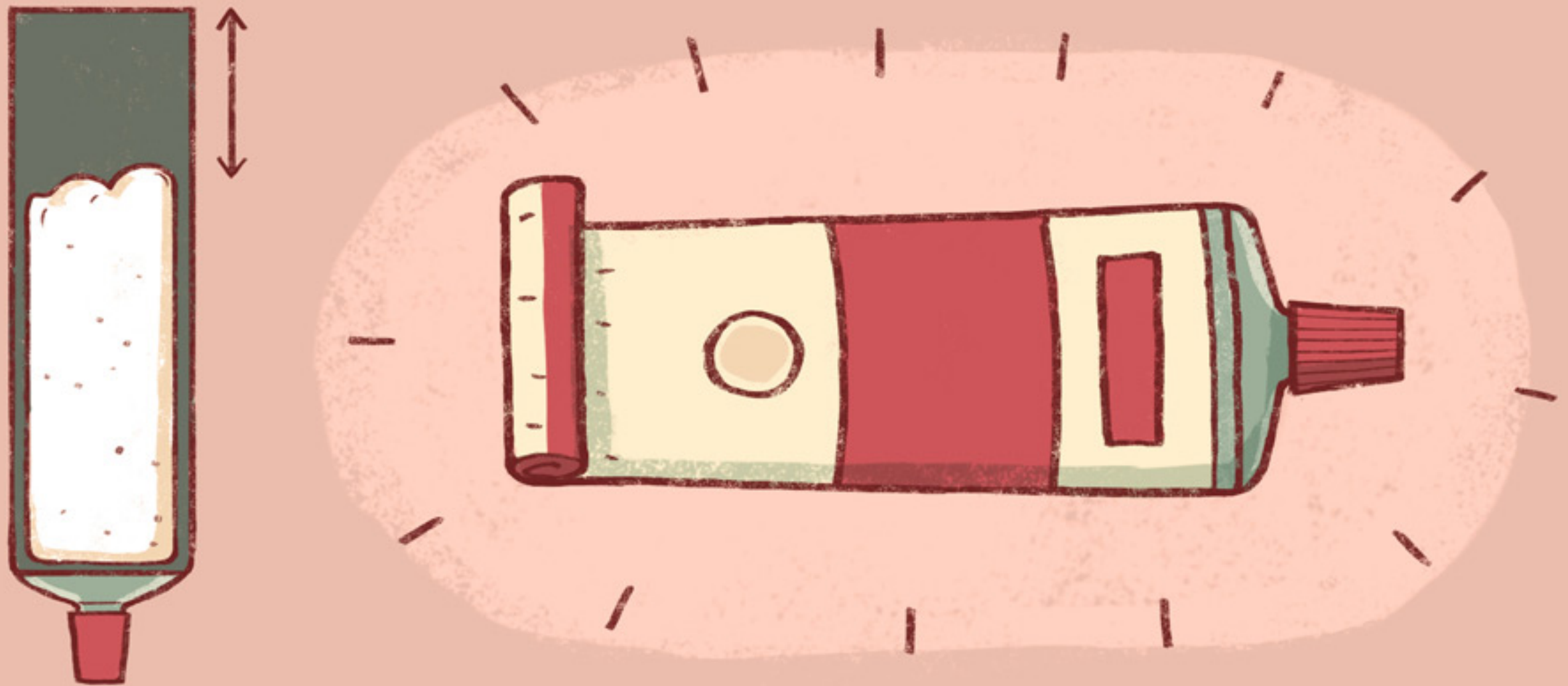


Today, toothpaste tubes are filled using machines. All the empty tubes are lined up on a conveyer belt with their caps downwards and the unsealed end pointing up. A big container filled with toothpaste is fixed above the conveyer belt.



From a nozzle at the bottom of the container, the toothpaste is let into each of these tubes as they move along the conveyor belt. But the paste is not filled all the way to the brim. About half an inch is left so that it can be sealed.

Now the tube is ready to be squeezed!



Reuse, Recycle, Rejoice!

Once toothpaste has been used up, you could do many things with the caps. Go ahead, be a 'collector'!

Use as pieces for board games. Use them as stamps for arts and craft. Use them to make toys for little ones. Here are some ways to do them.

