

## The Best Scientists 🧪

I have heard a lot about the Best Scientists 🤔🧪

Maybe the best scientists...  
make impactful discoveries,  
publish in gilded journals,  
garner millions in funding,  
with lots of indirects.  
And prizes, all the prizes 🏆

And everybody respects them.

OR...

Or maybe the best scientists spend extra time helping.  
They help their trainees; they help your trainees.  
They give trainees extra feedback on their posters 🧑🎓

Maybe the best scientists see the potential in trainees.  
Maybe the best scientists are the trainees 🤔🎓

Maybe the best scientists read your grant.  
They hand it back with too many tracked changes.  
They are grumpy about it, and so are you 😡

Maybe their CVs are packed with too much committee service 📄  
Maybe they make annoying insights at thesis meetings.

Maybe the best scientists ask questions at the end of seminar 🧑🎓  
when all you want to do is grab lunch.

Maybe the best scientists make the big leap 🚀  
Or maybe they fill in the details 🛠️

Maybe they have ideas that are always right.  
Or maybe they are wrong, but willing to change their minds.

Maybe the best scientists are generous with their time 🕒,  
generous with reagents,  
generous with data 📊

Maybe the best scientists get scooped 🍷  
You will never convince them they got scooped.  
Their competitor got some weird detail wrong.

Their competitor is also a friend 🧑🧑🍦

Maybe the best scientists are the ones who seem slow 🐢  
Then they get it right. They solve the problem.  
They publish the right answer without embellishment.  
You will hear from them again in about four years.

Maybe the best scientists are not the best in the classroom.  
Their transcripts have some blemishes ✖️  
They ask their mentors questions.  
They ask too many, and they are told to go away 🐝  
So they find better mentors and ask them the questions.

Maybe the best scientists are gifted educators 🧑🏫🏫  
They teach all 36 lectures of undergrad Cell Biology.  
Even though they got a B- in Cell Biology 20 years ago.  
Maybe nobody cares that they got a B- 📝  
Not even their mother 🙄

Maybe the best scientists have clean benches and perfect notes.  
And imperfect memory for detail.  
Or maybe they have chaotic benches full of reagents and wastepaper 🧑🏫  
And perfect memory for detail 🧠

Maybe the best scientists suck at cutting Parafilm.

Maybe the best scientists invest in diversity, equity, and inclusion 🤝  
Maybe the best scientists could tell you the differences between diversity, equity, and inclusion.  
Maybe the best scientists never commit misconduct of any sort.

No, not maybe.



Maybe the best scientists are nerds who focus on an obscure problem 🧐  
Maybe they had their best result 20 years ago.  
Maybe they read a lot 📖  
Or maybe they intend to read a lot 📚  
Maybe they review too many papers, and serve on too many editorial boards.

Maybe the best scientists “left science.”  
But the academics who said those scientists left are wrong.  
Those scientists are still doing science 🧪  
They just aren’t doing it in the way the academics are doing it 😞

Maybe the best scientists are the best parents 🧑🧑🧒  
On some days they are lousy scientists.

And they are lousy parents too.


Once upon a time, maybe the best scientists were perfect parents before they had kids.  
Maybe the best scientists are not parents.

Maybe something terrible happened to the best scientists  

Something personal, an awful life transition.


Productivity waned.

And then it came back, along with growth and empathy.

Maybe the best scientists know that everyone goes through something 

Maybe the best scientists lead big departments.

Maybe they say no a lot, yes a little.

Maybe they make deft use of carrots and sticks 

Maybe some of the best scientists will never lead a department.

Maybe the best scientists have limited skills.

And they admit it.

You do the biochemistry. I do the genetics. She captures the images 

Maybe the best scientists are all essential.

And maybe they are all replaceable.