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In August, freelance science writer Viviane Callier attended a small evolutionary-developmental-biology meeting in Calgary, Canada. She had asked the organizers if she could attend and report on the meeting, and they had agreed. Callier, a freelancer, hoped to turn some of the talks there into stories.

She particularly liked a talk about a blind cavefish. So she pitched the story to an editor at *Scientific American*, who gave her the assignment. But when Callier reached out to the researcher for an interview, he not only declined but also was upset that she was covering his talk at all. He told her she couldn't talk about his research because he had submitted it to a high-profile journal. He worried that if she wrote a story, the journal would reject his paper. Callier tried to assuage his concern by relaying what she had heard from her editor—that an interview with her wouldn't jeopardize his publication chances—but he still declined to cooperate.

The story ran anyway, and the scientist was furious. “It didn't feel great to know that I had upset this person,” Callier says. Her exchange with the researcher “really shook me up for a few days.” If she could do it over, she says, she might not have covered the talk without the researcher's go ahead. “Strategically, it doesn't make sense to antagonize people,” she says.

Callier isn't alone in her struggle to balance the free flow of scientific information with a desire to mollify scientists who are

Original, incorrect anecdote from “The Reluctant Scientist: When Meeting Presenters Get Cold Feet,” published at *The Open Notebook* on 11/14/2017. Corrected on 1/15/2018.