

## 6 | Are Scientists Mad?

"I saw a great movie last night," Jenny enthused as they all sat eating their lunches. "It was about this secret organisation that wanted to take over the world."

"I saw that too," Andy almost shouted. "Wasn't it great the way the hero was the only one who knew what they were trying to do, and nobody believed her – they all thought she was crazy?"

"Yeah, but the one that was really crazy was the mad scientist," Conchita reckoned. "He had invented a machine that could blow up a whole city from space, and it was lucky she got there in time to stop them."

"Why would you do that?" asked Alex.

"Did you want them to blow up Sydney?" Conchita interjected angrily.

"No, no – I didn't mean that," Alex hastily corrected. "I meant why would you want to invent something that could destroy a city?"

"Cos he was crazy, that's why," Andy opined. "You'd have to be crazy to do that."

"He certainly was crazy in the movie," Luigi put in, "but what about all those scientists that invent weapons? What about the guys who invented the atom bomb? Were they all crazy?"

"Yeah, and all those guns and mines and, and ... I heard about a bomb that, when it hits the ground, it just throws out lots of sharp bits of metal that cut up anyone nearby. Why would you want to invent something as horrible as that?" Jenny was clearly getting upset.

"That's scientists for you," Greta stated. "Think of all the nasty things they have invented, like GM food and cloning. I reckon they're all mad!"

"Yeah, and medicines and computers and solar energy," added Luigi. "It isn't all bad!"

"But that's what I was getting at," continued Alex. "Some stuff scientists do is good – lots of it, I guess – but some scientists just work on things that couldn't possibly be good, like horrible weapons. Why do they do that?"

"I bet they don't even think about whether it's good or bad. I reckon they just love to invent things, and they get carried away," Jenny said.

“Or they are just trying to understand how stuff works,” added Luigi. “I was reading about Albert Einstein, and it said that he invented the atom bomb, sort of. At least, he worked out that equation – you know,  $E=mc^2$  – and they used that to make the bomb. And he was a pacifist!”

“So, you reckon that the scientists are just doing science, do you,” asked Greta, “and that it isn’t their fault if other people make weapons out of it? I think if they know that what they’re doing can be used for bad stuff, they shouldn’t do it.”

“So some science shouldn’t be done at all,” mused Alex. “Who decides which is right?”