

THERE are loud and worrying sounds from the lab most days, but their frequency makes them no easier to bear. This one is especially piercing; Shadow feels his fur stand on end. When he goes back in, there will be some ghastly new experiment to contend with; the noise makes that quite clear.

Maria smiles, and plugs the headphones into her record player. “Try listening to this one,” she says. “I think you’ll like it.”

The headphones don’t quite fit over his ears, but her smile is enough encouragement for him to try to concentrate on the music. Soon, the long, wailing sound from the lab fades into insignificance. He can relax. Whatever they come up with in there, this is something they can never take from him.