For days they walked slowly but steadily, mostly uphill. The horses were beginning to stagger under their heavy loads. Sometimes they slipped and fell. Nearly all had large, infected sores where the packs had rubbed away the skin.

Abdul looked worried. “This is serious,” he told Khalid and Fayim. “If the horses are sick when we arrive at Peshawar, they won’t fetch a good price.”

“Are we going to sell all of them?” asked Fayim.

“As many as we can,” said Abdul.

Fayim glanced nervously at Baby. Was his father planning to sell the little donkey after all? Was this why they had brought him along? Fayim desperately hoped not.