



Witness Card for Investigator #4 – Hassan, Age 24

Hi, I'm Hassan, a tour guide. I hear you want to ask about John. I don't know if I can help you – I just met him once – but I'm glad to take you to some of the places where I took him. I'll try to recreate what we talked about.

John was fascinated by these Frankincense trees and the story of Frankincense in general. He says there was a song for your holiday of Christmas? Something about kings and Frankincense in it? And he said that he remembers the smell from church holidays when he was young. Well, it must have reminded him of church all the time because, as you see, Salalah smells of Frankincense. Yes, I can imagine the smell permeates your hotel (aroma therapy) – and you can smell it in taxis (as a deodorizer) and markets (where people are selling it). Everywhere in this region you find people selling it.

In fact, Frankincense was a big commodity in the history of the Dhofar region (where we are now), in adjacent Yemen, and the near-by coast of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia). These were the only places that these trees grow – or grew – now they are being raised elsewhere. John said he wished he could go to Yemen. He didn't go there, did he? That would explain why he died. Yemen is in a civil war right now – people say it is a violent and dangerous place. How sad for the people who live there.

Anyway, about incense: a lot of religions use it – not just the Catholics but Orthodox Christians and Jews and others. In ancient times, southern Arabia met almost all of the world's demand.

You can see that Frankincense is the sap from these trees here. The sap hardens on the bark, and we just scrape it off. There are all different colors of Frankincense – brown, yellow – but the white is the best quality.

I'm glad you were able to come to Dhofar, this region in southwestern Oman. It's really distinctive and lovely, isn't it? And it smells good too!