

# BOMBSHELL MURDER

By J. S. ENDICOTT

*Jack Sanford recognizes the grim scent of mystery!*

FROM the private office of the president of Marvel Perfumes, Limited came the steady murmur of voices and then an excited shout. Jack Sanford glanced at Joan Weaver and smiled.

"Sounds as if the boss has made another colossal discovery," Sanford said. "It's an inspiration that Joseph James Javier thought up all by himself—with the help of the research chemists, the head of the distillation department, the advertising manager, the art director and a man named Mike."

"And the result will be a new perfume to add to the Marvel line," Joan said. "But you should lower your voice to a hushed tone when you speak of J. J. He's a great man, Jack. If you don't believe it, he'll tell you so."

She rose from her desk—a lovely, slender, Titian haired girl—with plenty of poise. Joseph James Javier insisted upon his receptionist being decorative and Joan was as attractive as the pastel decorated room in which she worked.

Jack Sanford also fitted his surroundings. He was dark haired, well dressed, with a strong, handsome face. Two months ago he had been discharged from the Marines because of wounds received on combat duty overseas, and now he was back in his old job as head perfume salesman for Marvel Perfumes, Limited.

The door of the private office opened abruptly and Javier appeared. He was a small fat man who was usually so excitable that he reminded Sanford of a lighted firecracker looking for some place

to explode.

"We've got it—it's wonderful!" exclaimed Joseph James Javier. "This is *best inspiration*—a new scent that will have every woman in town crazy. It's a bombshell, that's what it is. Come in both of you. I want your reactions."



Jack Sanford

He turned from the doorway and Joan and Sanford followed him back into the private office. Here five men and two women were gathered around a vial of perfume that stood corked on the big table. It was a tiny object indeed to create so much excitement.

"Bombshell!" muttered Javier. "That's what we'll call it. Bombshell—the devastating perfume!"

"Wonderful!" said Sanford, and Javier didn't get the irony in his voice. "And I suppose you will sell it in hand grenades."

"Great!" said Joseph James Javier. He seated himself at his desk and then bounced up again. "I was just thinking of

that. We will make a perfume bottle that looks just like a hand grenade.”

“We might get up an advertising campaign on that, Chief,” said Bill Weeden, the advertising manager. “Find some spectacular way of introducing the new Bombshell perfume to the New York public. How about it, Rumsey?”

ALL who were present glanced at Rumsey, a thin-faced blond man who had joined the perfume company as a research chemist just two weeks ago. There was something about Carl Rumsey that Jack Sanford did not like, though the head salesman could not explain his antipathy.

“Let me smell the new perfume,” Joan said, picking up the vial and pulling out the cork. She sniffed. “Um, that is lovely—and not too loud either.”

“A quiet bombshell.” Sanford grinned as Joan handed him the vial and he tested the new scent. “Say, this isn’t bad at all.” He looked at Dan Larkin, the head of perfume testing lab. “What were the fixators, Dan?”

“The usual blends,” said Larkin, who was big and bald and glum looking. “Oils, balsams and synthetics—I don’t need to go into details. It’s a variation on the bouquets of flowery odor.”

“And nice, too,” said Joan.

“Don’t stand here talking,” shouted J. J. Javer in one of his sudden changes of mood. “Get to work, all of you!”

“Mohammed has spoken,” muttered Sanford as he headed for the door with the others following him. “We hear and heed.”

He caught a glimpse of Carl Rumsey’s face as the chemist glanced at the president of the perfume company. Hate gleamed in Rumsey’s eyes. He was glaring at Javer. Sanford wondered if there was some hidden feud between the two men.

In a few minutes everyone had gone

back to their work. As soon as the advertising manager had left Javer’s office, the president had called Bill Weeden back and the door was again closed as the two men talked.

Outside in the reception room, Sanford lingered as Joan seated herself at her desk. He went to a window and stood gazing down at the busy street five stories below. There was the usual traffic speeding by, bound north and south on Seventh Avenue.

“I don’t like it, Joan,” Sanford said, turning toward her. “Doesn’t it strike you that ‘Bombshell’ is a rather grim name for a perfume?”

“Yes,” she said. “And I don’t care the idea of using imitation hand grenades as containers.”

“But neither one of us is going to tell J. J. so,” said Sanford. He walked over to the desk. “Has there been any trouble between Javer and Rumsey?”

“Not that I have noticed,” said Joan. “Why do you ask, Jack?”

“Just had a hunch there might be.” Sanford frowned. “That’s all.”

The communicator on Joan’s desk buzzed. She flicked the switch, then listened.

“Send Rumsey in here.” J. J.’s voice sounded strange.

“Yes, Mr. Javer,” Joan said. “Right away.” She adjusted a switch, picked up a phone, called the manufacturing part of the plant, and told Rumsey that Mr. Javer wanted him at once.

Bill Weeden came out of the private office. The advertising manager did not look happy.

“He sure is in a mood today,” Weeden said. “Nothing suits him.”

“Nothing ever does,” said Sanford gazing at Weeden’s left sleeve. “J. J. is hard to get along with.”

Rumsey now appeared and went to the

president's office. He opened the door and walked in without knocking, closing the door after him. Weeden hurried into his own office down the corridor. Sanford continued to talk with Joan for a few moments longer.

"Looks like this is going to be quite a day," said Sanford finally, glancing at his wristwatch. "And it is only eleven A. M. I guess I'd better go see about selling our new line to that shop over on Madison Avenue."

"And don't forget to mention the Bombshell," said Joan with a smile she reserved for those she liked a lot. "Though you can't start selling Bombshell yet. J. J. might change his mind."

The door of Javier's office had silently opened as she spoke.

Rumsey stood in the doorway, his thin face expressionless.

"Mr. Javier will never change his mind about anything," Rumsey said. "He's dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed Sanford, moving closer. "What do you mean?"

"Look!" Carl Rumsey waved his hand toward the room behind him. "You'll see."

**J**ACK SANFORD stepped to the door and peered in. Joseph James Javier was still seated at his desk. But now the little fat man was slumped back in his chair. An ornate stiletto, which he used for a paper cutter, was sticking into his chest over the heart.

"Oh!" Joan stifled a shriek as she peered over Sanford's shoulder. "He's been murdered!" She looked wildly at Rumsey. "You did this. You killed him!"

"No," said Rumsey. "I didn't do it. He was dead when I entered the office. I made sure of it and then phoned the police on Javier's private outside wire. That's why I didn't come out again right away."

Joan didn't argue. She looked as if she were going to faint. She went back to her desk and just sat there. Sanford was thinking swiftly, his eyes fixed on the face of the blond man. Carl Rumsey could have stabbed Javier and then deliberately waited in the private office and phoned the police in order to cover himself.

"But J. J. was alive before you entered the office," Joan finally said, again looking at Rumsey. "I talked to him over the communicator just a few moments before you went in. He was alive then."

"Was he?" said Rumsey thoughtfully. "I wonder. Bill Weeden was called back into the office when we all left twenty minutes ago. Maybe he killed Javier."

"I guess we'd better let the police decide who did it," said Sanford quietly. "They are good at that sort of thing."

Some of the other members of the firm appeared and were told what had happened. A few minutes later the Homicide Squad arrived, Captain Doyle in charge. The police went to work without any fuss. It was all routine to them.

Doyle questioned everybody and learned all that he could about the murder. Obviously no one knew anything save Joan, Sanford, Weeden and Rumsey.

"So it boils down to this," said the captain finally. "Either Bill Weeden the advertising manager, or Carl Rumsey, the chemist, killed Javier. But they both claim they didn't do it, and I have no real evidence against either one of them."

Sanford discovered that Captain Doyle was a dangerously friendly soul. He gained your trust by apparently taking you into his confidence and then trapped you into admitting something you had not intended to reveal.

"Weeden did it," Sanford said, for Doyle was now talking to him alone. "I noticed a spot of blood on the right cuff of

his shirt when he stepped out of the office.”

“So did I when I questioned him.” The captain sighed. “But he also has a fresh cut on his wrist. Claims he got it opening a can of tomato juice for breakfast at home and didn’t have time to change his shirt because he was late. Could be.”

“Then you won’t make any arrests?” asked Sanford.

“Not enough evidence now,” said Doyle. “Maybe I’ll dig up something later.”

Javer’s body was taken away, the office was closed and everyone sent home after the police had departed. Sanford learned that Javer’s brother who had been a partner in the firm, but had retired, planned to step back into harness and run Marvel Perfumes, Limited.

A week later the firm was again doing business as usual. J. J. Javer had been buried and Captain Doyle was still quietly investigating the murder. All of the original employees were still in their old jobs. David Javer was bringing out the new Bombshell Perfume. He had thought of a publicity stunt that was as wild as any that might have occurred to J. J.

“The perfume bottles are actually made of thin metal,” the tall, thin old man announced to his staff. “The public has not seen them yet. So we are going to have Miss Weaver drop one out of the window and startle the crowd down on the street.”

“Don’t tell me the perfume explodes when it hits the ground,” Sanford said. “The police won’t like that.”

“No, of course not,” said David Javer impatiently. “It will merely break, and everyone will get a good whiff of the perfume.”

“Sure.” Sanford smiled faintly. “And the container will probably hit somebody when it drops, and they’ll sue the firm for fifty thousand, at least.”

“Nonsense!” Javer glared at the head salesman. “I don’t like your attitude, Sanford. You haven’t the right spirit.”

“Sorry, Boss,” said Sanford.

IT WAS arranged that Joan would toss one of the imitation hand grenades out of the window at noon that day from the window of the reception room. The more Jack Sanford thought about it, the sillier he considered the whole idea, but he had made no further comment. He liked his job too well to be too critical.

At noon Carl Rumsey, the chemist, brought one of the containers to the small group gathered in the reception room. It was the first of the new perfume bottles that Sanford had seen and he had to admit that the container looked like the real thing.

He went to the window and looked down. At the curb below two motor coaches were waiting for passengers and a crowd was gathering—getting ready to board the busses. An idea struck him and he drew Joan aside for a moment and talked to her in a low tone so the others could not hear him. She listened and then nodded.

“All right,” she said softly. “I’ll do it.”

“Now is the time, Miss Weaver,” said Javer as he stood in the reception room with Rumsey and Larkin and Bill Weeden. He picked up the grenade. “Heavier than I thought,” he remarked as he handed it to her. “Release that trigger on the top before you throw the grenade, please. The perfume is sure to come out then.”

“All right, Mr. Javer.” Joan took the grenade and went to the window. “Why, there’s your wife just getting on one of the busses Mr. Rumsey. Well, here goes!” She drew back her arm as if about to toss the grenade out of the window.

“No!” shouted Rumsey, leaping forward and grabbing her arm. “Don’t

drop it! That's a real hand grenade. My wife will be killed!"

No one noticed that the door leading into the hall had opened and Captain Doyle had stepped quietly into the room. He stood watching and listening.

"A real grenade!" exclaimed Javier. "But that's impossible."

"No, it isn't," snapped Sanford, staring at the grenade that Rumsey had wrenched from Joan's hand. "That grenade is real and the trigger has been tripped. It will explode at any moment and blow us all up."

Rumsey tossed the grenade toward Bill Weeden, who instinctively caught it. The advertising manager stood there—an expression of stark horror on his face. He seemed unable to move.

"Put it down, Weeden," said Jack Sanford calmly. "It won't explode. That isn't the real grenade. You see Dan Larkin discovered the real one that Rumsey planned to have Joan throw out the window. He switched it for one of the regular perfume containers."

"That's right," said the head of the testing lab. "There is no danger."

"But why did you try to do such a thing, Rumsey?" demanded Javier.

"For the same reason that he murdered J. J.," said Sanford. "Revenge. He thinks our firm stole a process from him which was worth a lot of money—cheated him out of it. He wanted to cause a public disaster and ruin the company."

"I was bilked," exclaimed Rumsey wildly. "The Javier brothers made me lose a fortune five years ago. So recently I got a job here under another name—and I'll have my revenge yet. I will, I tell you!"

"Five years ago," said Larkin. "Then your real name must be Carl Rand. I remember. We tried that process and it wasn't any good so we never used it."

"That's a lie," snapped Rumsey. "It was perfect."

"I had an idea you were the murderer, Rumsey," said Captain Doyle as he stepped forward. "And now I'm sure of it. You are under arrest."

He got a firm grip on the chemist and led him out of the room.

"I thought he might break if he believed someone close to him was in danger from the grenade," said Sanford. "That's why I had Joan say she saw Mrs. Rumsey getting on the bus, though she wasn't down there, of course." He looked at Javier. "Seems to me that your bombshell perfume nearly blew up in your face, Mr. Javier."

"That's right." Javier nodded. "We'll call it something else—and use a different container. I don't like the idea of grenades any longer. Indirectly it cost my brother his life."

"Why not call the perfume Memory in honor of J. J.," suggested Sanford. "I think he would like that."

"Good!" exclaimed Javier. "We'll do it. And no more bombshells!"