

HAWK IN THE WIND

(Continued from Page 1)

"Of course we'll stick," said Lucy eagerly.

"It might," Stanley Daniels suggested, "be possible to compromise."

Virgie blazed at him. "Compromise? Do I look like a woman who would compromise?"

"Business," Daniels defended, "is built on compromises. It has to be. Individualism cannot always survive."

"And so you think," Virgie cut back, "that I ought not to fight? That I ought to let Wallace Withers threaten to ruin me and never lift a hand? Is that what you think?"

"I think you are fighting a definite trend, Mrs. Morgan," Daniels grew a trifle oratorical. "You're living in an era which will see the death of the small business, of individual enterprise—personal control. There is an inevitability in it that you do not recognize. It may mean defeat for you and I think you are the sort of person who would suffer pretty badly in defeat."

"So you're thinking about my feelings, are you? Well, these are my feelings, in case any of you are in the dark. I had rather see the mill that David Morgan built destroyed—every brick, every wheel, every bolt in it—than to haggle with Wallace Withers—or surrender. If that's crazy, I'm crazy! Now, get to work, all of you! Lucy, get Champion on the wire and tell 'em I want seven hands for a few days. Decker men and outside hands. They've got part-time people always on hand they can spare. We won't grind today, we'll clean the mill. Come along, you boys."

She was fiercely executive all day. The atmosphere of the mill, already tense, grew galvanic as she cracked the whip of her indomitable will. Lucy Fields went about breathing excitedly but Wills, helping old Frank Emmet to clean and oil the drum-barkers and the toothy cables that snaked the green wood in for grinding, kept a thoughtful watch.

Even granting that this man Withers, who coveted the mill had, somehow, been able to engineer the various calamities that had descended on the plant in the past few days, there remained to be discovered the means by which he had worked.

Wills was not satisfied. He meant to do some sleuthing on his own.

He waited till the whistle blew at night and Lucy had put on her shabby green coat and gone out, then went to the office where Virgie sat studying a map on her desk. Outside murky lights burned in the yard and steam drifted down to lie in torn, cold wreaths along the ground.

Virgie looked up at him, and it appeared to Branford Wills that there was something deeper than weariness in her strong face. She looked a little stricken, as though something had been taken away from her that could not be returned.

She showed him the map. "This is what worries me," she said, "this land that belonged to Tom Pruitt. This is what Withers is counting on—this timber acreage. He and Payne and those other fellows—the fellow Tom shot—have got a court order allowing them to cut timber enough to satisfy their claims. And you know what that means. The court can't go up there and scale



"So you're thinking about my feelings, are you?"

up stuff. They'll strip it and with what timber is standing there they can set up a mill and run it for three or four years. Long enough to worry me, anyway."

"And you're convinced that Withers is at the bottom of all your troubles?"

"What else can I think? He came to my house last night and made (Continued on page seven)

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