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Sommario/riassunto	The Mediterranean Sea in World War II was the scene of prolonged and violent naval warfare between the British and the Axis powers, Italy and Germany. The stories of the major squadrons and their admirals have been told, as their actions led directly to the outcomes. Here is the tale of the smallest surface ships, their officers and men who, at the very tip of British sea power in that disputed sea, played vital roles in making possible the successes of the more famous forces. It is told by one of them -- a Canadian on loan to the Royal Navy who took a leading part from the lowest ebb in British fortunes through the struggle against almost overwhelming odds to the climax of the first landings on the continent of Europe. The select 3rd Flotilla of Motor Launches was the first to go abroad from the British Isles and the only one sent into the eye of the storm as the larger ships were driven out. Stead recalls passages in disguise through hostile waters, stand-up fights with aircraft, the siege and blitz of Malta, major convoy battles,

minesweeping in the forefront of the action, and the landings that drove Mussolini's Italy out of the war. He not only records specific contributions to the Allied cause unique for vessels of this type but also gives a front-row view of the battle for the central Mediterranean. Stead also tells of the "sea change" wrought in him under fire. Fresh from civilian life, and after sketchy basic training, he was thrust into command to learn the essentials of his new profession on the job under the urgent pressure of events. Ultimately Senior Officer of "the famed Malta flotilla," he notes his feelings as each successive increase in the menaces of war produced an inner adaptation that enabled him and his colleagues to rise calmly to the challenge of the next adventure.
