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Sommario/riassunto	From the Trojan Horse to a photograph snapped in Vietnam, world history has been shaped as much by chance and error as by courage

and heroism. Despite impossible odds, invincible armies fall in bitter defeat to weaker opponents. How and why does this happen? What decides the fate of battle? In this fascinating book, Erik Durschmied takes us through the major conflicts of history--from Agincourt to the Civil War, from Crimea to the Gulf War--and reveals how, in war, it is the improbable and the inconceivable that determine events. Writing with the style and flair that made him an award-winning war correspondent, Durschmied explores the fistful of nails that could have won Waterloo for Napoleon; the barrel of schnapps that proved disastrous for an Austrian emperor; and the three cigars that changes the course of Antietam; and many other instances when chance decided history's path. Conflicts are decided by the caprice of weather, erroneous intelligence, unlikely heroism, strange coincidence, or individual incompetence--in short, by the unpredictable "hinge factor."

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