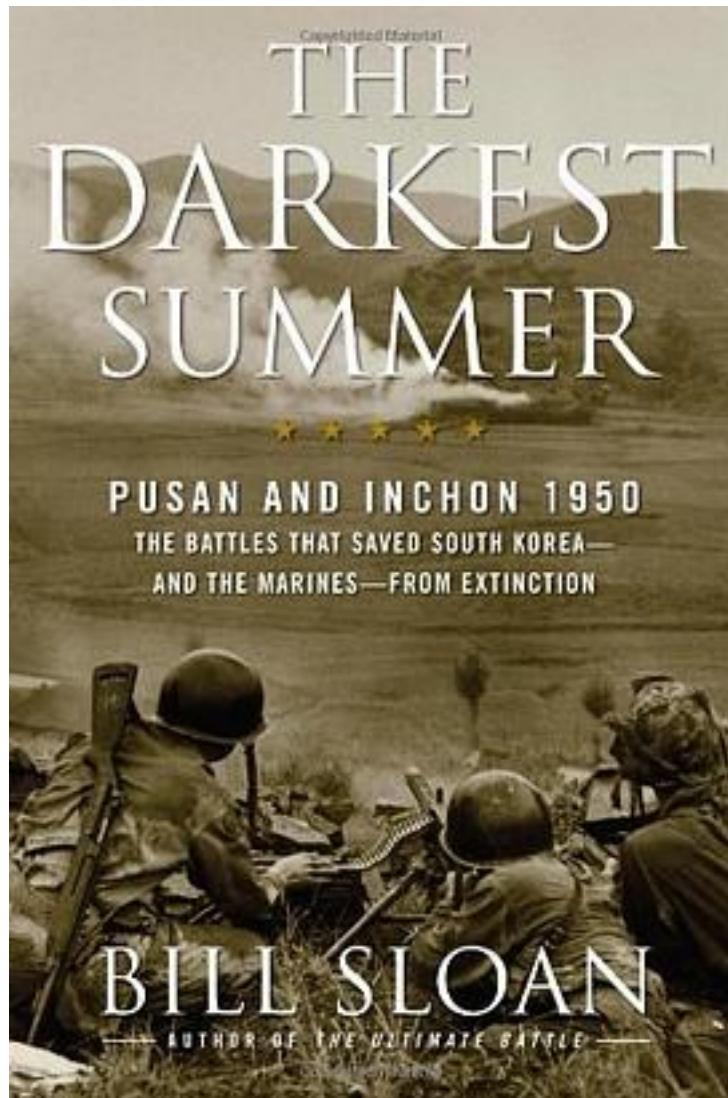


# The Darkest Summer



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One of the darkest periods in American military history began on June 25, 1950, when hordes of North Korean troops stormed across the 38th Parallel into South Korea. The Communists' blitzkrieg-style invasion came less than five years after the end of World War II, when the United States had owned the world's mightiest war machine, but it caught a carved-down, ill-equipped U.S. Army woefully unready. The Darkest Summer is the dramatic story of the first three months of the Korean War, captured through author interviews with dozens of surviving U.S. veterans, as it has never been told before. Seldom have American forces faced so grave a challenge or has faith in their ability to halt the enemy sunk lower. During July, the tank-led invaders advanced almost at will, slapping outmanned, outgunned American and South Korean troops with defeat after defeat. By August, the defenders were bottled up in a shallow perimeter around the port of Pusan at the southeastern tip of Korea and perilously close to being driven into the sea. Then a miraculous reversal began taking shape. A small "Fire Brigade" of Marines reached Pusan to reinforce the U.S. Eighth Army and try to stabilize the front. At the time, the axes of Washington budget cutters were threatening the Marine Corps -- whose ranks were painfully thin -- with extinction. But in brutal, weeks-long combat, portrayed here in Band of Brothers fashion through the eyes and emotions of men who endured this darkest summer, the Marines managed to stop the enemy for the first time. General Douglas MacArthur's brilliantly executed amphibious strike far behind enemy lines at the port of Inchon -- also led by the Marines -- along with the Eighth Army's breakout from Pusan, broke the back of the North Korean Army, saved South Korea from Communist takeover, and rescued the Marines from extinction. The men who fought there disproved forever the idea that hellish fighting in mud, blood, and chaos was obsolete in the nuclear age. The Darkest Summer reveals how one ninety-day period changed the course of modern history. But unfortunately, the Korean "police action" didn't end there. MacArthur's reckless advance to the Yalu River and China's entry into the war resulted in U.S. forces meeting disaster that winter in the icy wastes of North Korea, forfeiting many of their earlier gains and bogging down in a long, unnecessary stalemate. The Darkest Summer opens a unique and revealing window on this all-but-forgotten war. A narrative studded with gripping eyewitness accounts, it focuses on the three fateful months when the Korean War's most decisive battles were fought and the Americans who fought them went -- however briefly -- from the depths of despair to the exultation of total conquest.

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