

The Lifespan of a Fact

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of a Fact.**

**John D'Agata,
author.**

**Jim Fingal,
fact checker.**

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How negotiable is a fact in nonfiction? In 2003, an essay by John D'Agata was rejected by the magazine that commissioned it due to factual inaccuracies. That essay which eventually became the foundation of D'Agata's critically acclaimed *About a Mountain* was accepted by another magazine, *The Believer*, but not before they handed it to their own fact-checker, Jim Fingal. What resulted from that assignment was seven years of arguments, negotiations, and revisions as D'Agata and Fingal struggled to navigate the boundaries of literary nonfiction.

This book reproduces D'Agata's essay, along with D'Agata and Fingal's extensive correspondence. What emerges is a brilliant and eye-opening meditation on the relationship between truth and accuracy and a penetrating conversation about whether it is appropriate for a writer to substitute one for the other.