

The Bug in the Vitamin Bottle

Like pretty well everybody else, with age my intake of, I'm assured, life-extending pills has gradually expanded. This process began some years past with my "health provider" pressing on me a prescription for pills designed to counteract increasing blood pressure. Later, emboldened, he insisted that I include in my medical diet capsules intended to reduce the obscure "bad" cholesterol which threatened to clog my arteries, while enhancing the equally obscure "good" variety, which threatened, apparently, nothing. As a firm believer in the efficacy of modern medicine, I followed, and continue to follow, these injunctions religiously. Recently a routine blood test at my local clinic revealed that I had a slight vitamin B12 deficiency, and my health provider suggested that I add a dose of B12 tablets to my daily regimen. So I dutifully trotted off to the drugstore and bought a container of the recommenced pills. Now it happened that the container I bought was equipped not with the usual screw cap, but one of those so-called "convenience" caps which, after it's snapped off, remains attached to the container even when not snapped back on. I snapped off the cap and took my first pill, but didn't bother to snap it back on. The next morning I went through the usual pill-dispensing routine, but when I picked up the B12 container and shook it to deposit into my palm what I expected to be the usual nondescript tablet, I was astounded to find that the "tablet" showed distinct signs of animation. Like a construct from the imagination of Philip K. Dick, the thing was equipped with legs on which it started to scabble, as well as wings which it vibrated in a futile attempt to take off. I soon identified it as one of the harmless shieldbugs which I have occasionally come across in the house, and for which I have developed a certain fondness. Perhaps that bug had been told by *its* health provider that it had a massive B12 deficiency which required immediate rectification. How fortunate, then, from its point of view, that I had left the container open! In any event I gently removed the creature from my palm, deposited it carefully on the windowsill, and left it to its innocent devices.