



The Shard of Asclepius

Stewart F. Brennan

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A young man is thrust into a conflict spanning centuries when he happens upon a mysterious stone in the intriguing novel The Shard of Asclepius.

In Stewart F. Brennan's fantasy novel *The Shard of Asclepius*, an ancient mythological relic resurfaces, reigniting a centuries-long struggle between two groups of order.

David is on a path of healing after a long battle with unemployment and addiction. On a trip through Ontario, a spark of intuition leads him to stop at a small amethyst mine. There, David digs until he unearths an unnatural, triangular shard of amethyst. The stone possesses the incredible ability to heal—or cause great destruction.

David's discovery thrusts him into a conflict spanning centuries. It exists between the Order of Hermes, a group dedicated to protecting mythical items, and the Collective, a rival organization embedded in Western political and enforcement groups. Galen, an elderly antique shop owner and a member of the Order of Hermes, tells David about the shard's true origin, even as the Collective moves to use mythical items to amass more power, traveling between Canada and New York City to do so. With the help of the Order of Hermes—including members like Francis, a professor of history—David seeks to find out what exactly the shard is and why it seems to have chosen him.

The book is centered by connections between the amethyst shard and ancient mythology via Hermes and Asclepius, the gods of messengers and medicine respectively. But such grandeur is somewhat undermined by the book's slow pace, which goes over the minutiae of the characters' movements and decisions at length, including their travel plans, experiments with the crystal, and the Order's confrontations with the Collective. While its action scenes are involving, its exposition—as with its lectures on history—is less so. Further, the cast's voices are inconsistent: sometimes they sound quite young, and at other times, more formal and academic. Sometimes, such switches happen in the middle of conversations too.

Intrigue resumes when David forms a fast romance with another member of the Order of Hermes. New Age ideas are also integrated, piquing interest in the ongoing conflict: characters often talk about the power of crystals, which are said to be capable of opening people up to higher levels of consciousness. Meditations on humanity's lost connections to nature and on how technology corrupted society also wend in.

The first novel in a series, *The Shard of Asclepius* melds ancient mythology with contemporary conflicts when a mysterious crystal shard leads to a violent clash for power.

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