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Twelve-year-old Gwyn Rae, bored with homework and stalked by a local bully, decides to boost his history mark by researching his ancestor, Daniel Rae. With help from his older sister, Maddie, who is also troubled by systemic bullying by her soccer team-mates, the two begin reading Daniel’s papers. Together they find a notebook filled with writing only they can see, and they discover an iron key that tingles when they hold it.

When Gwyn and Maddie use the key to unlock a secret door at Daniel’s old church, they discover a dragon, Hermit, the last of its kind. Caring for Hermit, keeping him a secret from their parents, and also learning the history of the dragons keep the children busy. Hermit explains how dragons have helped to keep the world in balance and helps the children fulfil the prophecy that lifts the curse keeping evidence of the dragons hidden.

While Maddie finds new friends who help her stand up to her bullying teammates, Gwyn develops new friendships based on a shared love of history (and especially local Newfoundland history), the determination to preserve the past, and a new understanding of how human behaviour impacts the world. The Holocene mass extinction, referring to the widespread, ongoing mass extinction of species during the modern Holocene epoch, becomes the lightning rod for Gwyn’s renewed interest in scientific study.

Although this novel is set in the same world at Janet McNaughton’s *Dragon Seer*, the story is complete on its own, offering hope and agency.

**Thematic Links:** Newfoundland; Dragons; Picts; History; Environment

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