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Posted on 05 February 2019 By Elizabeth Kostova

[Read Kindle] ? The Historian ? Weplayit.co

This is my favorite book of ALL time from any genre At its core this is a book about Drakulya, about his history and his impact on those that knew him and those that have

hunted the truth about him for centuries. The novel opens with an unnamed female voice informing the reader in the year 2008 that she is about to tell the story of what happened to her thirty years before. The story is mostly about her father Paul, a historian turned diplomat, and his search for Dracula, Vlad the Impaler. This narrator, raised alone by her father after her mother's death, finds a book in her father's study when she was 16. The book has no text, but at its center, is a woodcut image of a dragon carrying a banner with the single word Drakulya. In addition, she finds letters dated from 1930, and we get to read them and thus become part of the fabulous journey to find out where the letters came from and what they mean. Ms Kostova had me at mysterious book and Dracula. Soon Paul is searching a library in Istanbul when he finds a map that suggests that Vlad's grave is not where conventional historical wisdom says it is, but he can't tell from the map where it might actually be. An encounter with an evil and mysterious stranger makes him decide that it's a research topic that he should drop. He doesn't drop it and he takes us on an atmospheric and historical jaunt all over Europe. Of course Dracula being Dracula he and his undead minions will stop at nothing to protect their secrets, including the location of Vlad the Impaler's grave. For me this book reads like a travelogue, a paean to history, and a love story, with the horror of unspeakable evil and the race to save loved ones the glue that binds it all together. This is actually the second time I've read this book. For a first novel, it is outstanding. I was completely engrossed in the story. I really love history and the whole Dracula lore. I thought it was a great mix of both. It added a lot of suspense that made me read it with the lights on. I think I read it in about four days, I just couldn't put it down. I will say this though, if you are not really into history or researching, I would skip it. If you are wanting to read it just because it has to do with Dracula, I would pick a much smaller book. However, I just love history and research. Duh, I work in a library so it was right up my alley. Actually, I'm doing a little research on it myself. I did read some of the comments on .com and wasn't exactly surprised by the comments. It was either a love it or hate it book. That is why I throw my caution out there. Basically, people who didn't enjoy it were out for a Dracula story and thought the history was a drag. I'm really into history so I thought it was pretty damn good. I will say I did discover a few historical inaccuracies, but I think I'll let them fly for now. All in all, a good read, especially for a rainy day. [Read Kindle] ? The Historian ? Late One Night, Exploring Her Father's Library, A Young Woman Finds An Ancient Book And A Cache Of Yellowing Letters Addressed Ominously To My Dear And Unfortunate Successor Her Discovery Plunges Her Into A World She Never Dreamed Of A Labyrinth Where The Secrets Of Her Father's Past And Her Mother's Mysterious Fate Connect To An Evil Hidden In The Depths Of History This novel is better than I had any anticipation of it being. I'd seen it among a friend's luggage then later saw it at the library. Having just come off three weeks of nineteenth century novelists, I thought, Oh, something light would be a nice change. After all, I thought Vampires. The book is about vampires. And not just any vampire, but the mack daddy himself, Dracula, the real Vlad the Impaler, who turns out to be the

undead. Light reading Sure Six hundred and fifty pages of vampires that is less concerned with torn pulsing arteries than with the minutiae of historical research And much like Dracula, to which Kostova novel The Historian owes an incalculable debt so than many another vampire novel, the novel is constructed as a story within a story within a story. One of the novel's central conceits is how much of the story is told in the form of letters written by the young female narrator's father As this sum surpasses well over 300 pages in type, obvious plausibility considerations of scale arise, but only if you stop to think about it long enough In the middle of the father Paul's letters, he is handed a parcel of letters written by his mentor, Bartolomeo Rossi which are also substantially sized documents. As their stories take them further and further into Eastern and Central Europe, the texts begin to shelter one inside the other inside the other like Russian nesting dolls As the narrator reads the letters of her father, Paul tells of visiting a Bulgarian scholar who reads to him from a manuscript which includes in its history yet another person's lengthy transcription of in fact one person's reminisces about Vlad Tepes This kind of layered story is most definitely part of Kostova's novel's sensibility, and it's rather an amusing in joke. What's impressive about all this is how Kostova weaves three sizable narratives together, alternating time and place and narrative voice We first are in Amsterdam of 1972 as our young narrator, a sixteen year old school girl, tells of discovering a mysterious volume in her diplomat father's office and later of her journey to France Part of what sends her out are the letters she is reading left to her by her father after he vanishes, telling of his travels and investigations into the Dracula legend in the 1950s Eastern Bloc He is launched across the Soviet empire as well as through the byzantine mazes of Istanbul's streets and libraries trying to discover what became of his missing mentor Along the way as we try to find Rossi, we are told of his 1930s investigations into the Dracula legend in Romania. On top of that, there are vast stores of erudition on fifteenth century monasteries, the cultural divide between Romanians and Transylvanians, the Walechian court, medieval church politics, central European folk songs, Bulgarian religious rituals based around old pagan traditions, historian cataloging and research methodology, and the overlapping history of Central Europe with its shifting rulers of Ottomans, the Orthodox church and its tiny fiefdoms, and the Soviet Union For, thinking about it as an historian, the undead would have lived through an impressive array of eras. Consider this rather late passage The Chronicle of Zacharias is known through two manuscripts, Athos 1480 and R.VII.132 the latter is also referred to as the Patriarchal Version Athos 1480, a quarto manuscript in a single semi-unical hand, is housed in the library at Rila Monastery in Bulgaria, where it was discovered in 1923 This original manuscript was probably housed in the Zographou library until at least 1814, since it is mentioned by title in a bibliography of fifteenth and sixteenth century manuscripts at Zographou dating from that year It resurfaced in Bulgaria in 1923, when the Bulgarian historian Atanas Angelov discovered it hidden in the cover of an eighteenth century folio treatise on the life of Saint George Georgi 1364.²¹ in the library at Rila Monastery. The second and only other known

copy or version of the Zacharias Chronicle R.VII.132 or the Patriarchal Version is housed at the library of the Oecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople and has been paleographically dated to the mid or late sixteenth century. Not your average vampire book, eh And that's one of the funny things about reading this novel At times, you have to remind yourself that this is a book about vampires Not that Kostova won't remind you at some point along the way herself, but that there is so much enjoyable writing throughout, so much fun detective work, that at times the supernatural element seems almost decidedly secondary. Kostova knows well enough to keep the monsters off the stage as long as possible, merely make suggestive shadows lurk here and there on the periphery and affect a rather creepy atmosphere After a point there are a hair too many overt murders that sap some of the menace, surprisingly, as they make the gathering darkness all too palpably concrete Then there are a number of vampire staples that might turn up normally anyway A bat flitters across a night sky In the woods near a ruin, a wolf approaches the edge of the firelight After sitting for some time near a railing cobby with webs, Helen Rossi, daughter of Paul's mentor and mother to the unnamed young narrator, ends up with an enormous spider on her back These stand ins for the vampire are pleasantly unsettling without being accompanied by shrieking violins. What propels each of the main characters, the young girl whose name we never discover, her father Paul, and his mentor, Rossi, is the discovery of a mysterious old book among their own, a book with one printed page, that of a dragon with a banner reading Drakulya while the rest of the pages are blank Throughout the novel we find that each character who has become obsessed with the legend of Vlad Tepes possesses a similar book that came to them under curious circumstances Why and how these volumes keep turning up is one of the novel's mysteries and it's one of Kostova's rather clever conclusions in her own well thought out realization of the character of Dracula And there is throughout the book an enormous cast of characters, not merely just historical personages, but various researchers and students and librarians and bureaucrats and all of them are well drawn, interesting, and fully fleshed. We know, of course, from the very beginning, before the narrator even informs us, that when her father Paul speaks of a young beauty named Helen who he meets while trying to track down his missing mentor, that this will be the overtly absent mother of the young narrator And, of course, since she is absent, we know there is a reason for that, and of course, as this is a horror novel, we know she is dead or worse Kostova manages to keep even that particularly familiar angle surprising The author is at least a thorough going plotter and she paces everything beautifully, setting up revelations with periodic sparks All three story lines converge some hundred pages out from the novel's end and from there the story picks up and aims squarely toward its conclusion. The actual climax of the novel as our heroes close in on Dracula and his daytime resting place seems rather rushed, ending just all abruptly as if Kostova had opted just to skip overt dramatics, which feels a bit of a cheat, though she does make up for this lack of action with a final pages reversal that is as unsettling as it is quiet. Tentatively, my

hand crept towards the mouse What dark and unholy specter could be contained in other people s reviews of Elizabeth Kostova s The Historian I was filled with passive voiced dread as the link was clicked by me I was horrified to read xdragonlady s review My main problem with the book being that the author told the tale from so many different points of view, but that they were each told in first person without giving the reader any notice as to who was telling the tale I don t understand why this book is on the bestseller s list I was aghast Could the novel I had just read really have been a confounding multi tiered multiple first person narrative with lack luster voices which the author clearly mistook for a clever attempt at recreating a sense of research With much hesitation, I read onl find myself thinking of my mother s comment after she read the Da Vinci Code, that it was ok but she knew many other books that were written much better that should be best sellers I wish Brien had read the book at the same time as I did, I would liked to have talked to him about it Blast I too wondered what xdragonladyx s mother and friend Brien would have thought If only she could have included a detailed transcription of their own reviews I may now never know if either of them viewed The Historian as an attempt to capitalize on the fad of Dan Brown style mysteries and the vampire genre Suddenly, a wayward link caught my eye and I clicked. Silver s review I think I read some review here on GoodReads that called this a book to be conquered You know, one where after a time you feel so invested that you MUST finish it, you must defeat the book, you will NOT give up, no matter how much you are suffering Whoever said that about Kostova s The Historian, I salute you As I read this thing about someone reading something else somewhere, I was reminded of my own refusal to allow the dry 600 page tome to defeat me, and that by the time I had completed the flatulent ending, not only had I conquered it, but impaled it still screaming onto a ten foot stake It was dead and without the risk of ever returning to life, so that no one would ever have to read it again. You re welcome. Am I destined for some kind of literary hell if I say I wish Dan Brown would rewrite this story with the spark and intensity of the Da Vinci Code I think I read some review here on GoodReads that called this a book to be conquered You know, one where after a time you feel so invested that you MUST finish it, you must defeat the book, you will NOT give up, no matter how much you are suffering Whoever said that about Kostova s The Historian, I salute you. I kept telling my friends I was reading a book about hunting for Dracula through libraries across Europe, and that it was about as exciting as it sounds I also needed to conquer this book because I wanted to figure out why so many people, good friends of mine included, loved this book Maybe the long, hard, snoozy slog, occasionally punctuated by some good old fashioned undead suspense every hundred pages or so, would have a really terrific ending that made it all worth it Clearly Kostova is very influenced by Gothic and Victorian writers like Stoker, so maybe this book would have a grand payoff of an ending to merit the praise and best sellerness. Instead, Dracula is a librarian Sigh Just as boring as it sounds. It wasn t completely terrible many charicterizations are off the charts for their specificity and originality The thing about the books with the

Drakulya print was really intriguing Except that s not enough The Drakulya books, which could be counted as a premise, with the intrinsic map that is hammered on as a significant discovery, amount to nothing The map doesn t even figure into the conclusion Not even with a character saying, we were totally wrong about that map So while I enjoyed parts of this book, and had many moments when I couldn t put it down the alternate to finding it incredibly tedious, with no in between , I think its merits don t outweigh its shortcomings I wish I d read an Actual Gothic novel maybe even by Bram Stoker instead of wasting way too long on this frustrating book. I would have enjoyed being at the pitch meeting for Elizabeth Kostova s The Historian It had to have gone something like this Well, most people think Dracula isn t real, Kostova must have explained What this book supposes is that not only is he real, but he s still alive, and wreaking havoc on the world She must have paused here, expecting, perhaps, to be thrown from the room Allowed to remain, she plunged forward My main character is a historian All the action takes place in libraries, and consists of primary source research Yes, primary source research As in, looking at really old writings, and then discussing them, a lot Also, it is over 600 pages long. Clearly, that meeting went well The Historian was the it book of 2005 It came with a huge advance and big expectations and a national promotional tour From the start it was a bestseller, capitalizing on the success of The Da Vinci Code, with which is share than a few similarities I purchased The Historian back in 2005, and it has sat on my bookshelf ever since A lot of time has passed since then I was young, and single, and childless, and I hadn t even heard of A Game of Thrones Now I m not so young, single, or childless, and at times I wish I d never heard of A Game of Thrones All that time sitting has been rough on The Historian It now looks as old and worn as one of the ancient documents fondled so lovingly by the characters who populate the novel I m not sure what persuaded me to finally read it, other than a gnawing guilt that I paid cover price for it twelve years ago While The Historian s premise is simple, the plot is hopelessly convoluted Like Bram Stoker s Dracula, this is an epistolary novel, with large chunks of it coming in the form of letters written by various characters The story unfolds in three different time periods The central thread is set in the 1970s and is narrated by the unnamed daughter of a historian turned diplomat named Paul The daughter stumbles upon an old book that, like the VHS tape in The Ring, brings nothing but trouble to the reader Paul eventually leaves his daughter to embark on some unfinished business the daughter, needless to say, pursues him The second timeline is set in the 1950s These portions are comprised of letters written by Paul to his daughter They detail his pursuit along with a companion named Helen of both Dracula, and his mentor, Professor Bartholomew Rossi, who has gone missing Finally, there is a briefer arc set in the 1930s, made up by letters written by Rossi himself The plot contrivances and temporal leaps are not inherently difficult to follow However, the aesthetics of The Historian lead to confusion I didn t have any problem with the Rossi letters set in the 1930s Kostova makes clear that we re reading a letter by providing a dateline, and setting the letter in italics The Paul letters, on

the other hand, are given only quotation marks. In other words, huge chunks of the novel the Paul Helen 1950s thread is the book's lengthiest. It consists of a nested narrative, ala Joseph Conrad. This means quotation marks. A lot of quotation marks. You have to pay close attention to shifts between the unnamed daughter's story and Paul's story. Both are told in first person, with little use of proper nouns. The only indicator as I've indicated are quotation marks. This not only causes uncertainty, but annoyance. I had to keep rereading sentences to separate narration from dialogue. At one point, the Paul letters decide to get a little meta, so that there is a letter within a letter. You know what that means, right? Quotation marks on top of quotation marks. Just quotation marks all the way down. One of the interesting things about *The Historian* is its languorous pacing. Things don't really snap into gear and start moving until around 200 pages in. Those first couple hundred pages were like a European travel guide than a historical thriller. Paul and his daughter travel around, seeing cool sights, eating various biscuits, and having long conversations. Despite the lack of inertia, these pages were my favorite. Kostova's great gift is in description. She is excellent at breathing life into a place, whether that's a sunny afternoon on the Piazza San Marco in Venice, a glimpse at the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, or a foreboding monastery in Communist-run Bulgaria. My wife and I had our third child not too long ago, so the only traveling we're doing is the midnight journey into madness. It's nice, then, to visit exotic locales, if only in the mind. Kostova also has a Tolkien-esque thing for food and drink. The reader is treated to many vicarious meals as the characters hopscotch around the globe. Even when Kostova's creations are in gravest danger, they are never too near death to have a pleasant cup of tea. Even as the plot gradually tightens, there is never much action. Sure, there are bursts of movement. Mostly, though, *The Historian* takes on a predictable pattern. Paul and Helen go to various countries, find an old monastery church library, and speak with someone who is either totally helpful or totally against them. One of their nemeses is the evil librarian. Not kidding, that's what he's called. They learn a clue, make their plans, and then head to the next destination. One is tempted to say that *The Historian* attempts to do for historians what Indiana Jones did for archaeologists. Except that isn't entirely true. The historians in this novel really act a lot like real historians, except on meth. Paul and Helen visit archives, peruse old-timey documents, and attempt to decipher the past. This is rather typical for a researcher, save for the part about being stalked by the undead. Neat tourist locales and sumptuous repasts cannot entirely hide the fact that everything else is thin gruel. The characters are props, not people. Nobody has any personality, or depth, or even a quirk. Well, that's not entirely true. Paul's quirk is that he keeps groaning. Seriously. His only reaction is to groan, or to stifle a groan. Jeez, Paul, grow up. You aren't six any more. The putative main character, the daughter/overall narrator, doesn't even have a name. There isn't a believable interaction in 642 pages. Paul sets out to find Rossi, his mentor, because... Why? To drive the story. We are told that Paul loves Rossi, but the key word is told. The book tells us how to feel, instead of convincing us with rich characterizations. There are, in fact, enormous spans

of time in which Paul doesn't think about Rossi at all, though he remembers to describe every meal he eats in his letters. A brief rant about epistolary novels. In short they are such a silly conceit. It just takes me out of the novel's world. Am I really supposed to believe that a character would write a letter hundreds of pages long? Or that this letter would be structured as a novel, replete with withheld information, reams of dialogue, internal monologues, telling details, and cliffhangers? It's actually dumb. There's a reason Paul can't catch Dracula. He's too damn busy writing his War and Peace length letter to his daughter. The characters are not helped by the leaden dialogue. Just about everything spoken is exposition. I don't necessarily expect Aaron Sorkin like exchanges, but still, it'd be nice to have one evocative conversation. This is a summertime read, so I grade it on that curve. It's not bad by any means. Certainly, it wasn't a chore to finish. But I'm also not going to give it an entirely free pass just because it's a literary guilty pleasure or whatever the term is to describe a book you're reading when you should be finishing Dickens. The Historian isn't nearly as fun as its ridiculous foundation implicitly promises. This should be over the top goofy. There should be grand guignol violence. There should be sex, or at least half a million double entendres. There is no sex at all, which happens when you structure a novel as a father's letter to his daughter. There should be a realization that this material is fundamentally lowbrow, then go even lower but with class. Instead, Kostova handles this with portentous seriousness. This doesn't contain any of the gonzo amusement that a globetrotting trip around Europe on Dracula's heels should rightfully entail. This book is impossible to resist. It has fairly leapt to the top shelf, where it's nestled down deep with my all-time favourites. I confess to being initially reluctant to delve into this story, I mean who really needs another campy, vampire tale. Lucky for me I put these feelings aside long enough to read the first chapter after which there was no looking back. Step into the pages and begin an eerie, haunted, hypnotic adventure thoroughly saturated in ancient history and wondrous, exotic, old European churches, monasteries and libraries that are positively brimming with ancient parchment and long, forgotten maps and books. Kostova's historical tracking of the real Vlad Drakulya is flawless and she is able to describe with a chilling, atmospheric eye for detail, the many settings as well as the political climate in which this story unfolds. A full speed ahead rich, historical thriller with enough gothic images, cultural folklore, ancient crypts and creaking stairs that it is sure to raise the hair on the back of your neck and no doubt a compulsive, insatiable interest in this age-old tale. This truly is GREAT fiction. This has got to be one of the most disappointing books I've read in a long time. Although the descriptions of the various eastern European cities are often pretty and atmospheric, my frustration with this book won't let me mark it above one star. It starts out well very interesting and suspenseful for about the first 100 pages or so. But as you read it, the book just gets and ridiculous. It's about 600-900 pages long which is way, way too long and I urge anyone reading this book to just put it down or read one of the one star spoiler reviews and be done with it. Or better yet, ignore the book entirely. What bothered me most I'll try to make a list of my top

issues Coincidences Everything in this book happens by some remarkable coincidences One here or there would be fine, even interesting, but it s as if the author decided here s how the plot should go , and couldn t be bothered to come up with realistic reasons for characters to do things and just wanted to move them from one point to another One of the characters even ends up with amnesia Amnesia Like from a bad soap opera I mean, are you kidding So stuff just happens For no reason Which leads me to Stuff just happens For no reason Such as characters getting together romantically, well, just because No build up, no logic, they just do because I guess they re both there and they have nothing better to do Which leads me to The characters themselves Completely non existent One reviewer on said that if you take any random section of dialogue from the book, it is impossible to tell which character it came from So true The author is completely incapable of creating realistic, breathing characters that are different from each other Instead they all talk the same, they all have the same reactions, the same motives, hook up randomly in the same way, etc There is nothing believable about these people And for some reason, they all write unbelievably detailed letters Which leads me to Unbelievably detailed letters Now I have read a number of great books that use the format of letter writing to convey the plot But this Ridiculous Not only are these letters insanely long, but they are insanely detailed as well, creating yet another reason why the book and the characters are completely unbelievable If that s how the author wanted to write this, why did she do the letter thing at all Which brings me to my final big gripe I ve leaving the small ones out The ending OMG if you value your sanity, do not, I repeat DO NOT finish this book Because if you are sane, you will get to the ending and go, What What Are you f n kidding me That s the stupidest thing I ve ever heard No joke The ending, especially after 600 pages, has got to be the biggest let down of any major novel in recent years I won t spoil it here however badly I want to vent about it , but I swear to you it will cause you physical agony when you read it. In short bad book, promises a lot and delivers none of it Ignore it, read something else. January 3, 2014 Dear Khanh of 2006, I am your older, wiser self Many things will happen in the years that have elapsed before you become the me of today You will fall in love You will break hearts You will get your heart broken karma s a bitch You will change jobs You will graduate from college. Most importantly, you will become intelligent, you will learn the art of advanced thinking because really, all college teaches you is how to get good grades by regurgitating textbooks When you are older, as you begin to read critically, you will learn to appreciate a good book, and you will be able to identify literary bullshit when you see it. That s all this book is Literary bullshit. This book is dramatic rubbish, artistic gibberish It is nothing than a glorified travel brochure. Seriously, younger Khanh, what the fuck were you thinking when you enjoyed this book You thought it was sweet, you thought it was romantic, you thought the writing was beautiful Really Really Between 2006 and 2014, you will be able to identify purple prose when you see it You will realize that flowery prose is not good writing Correlation does not imply causation, and good writing does not necessarily encompass a good plot. You will be

able to recognize a deus ex fucking machina when you see it Oh, I know that you learned about deus ex machina in AP English You learned a lot of things in English class You learned about symbolism, foreshadowing, all that good shit, but really, it does you no fucking good unless you are able to identify it when you see it And clearly, you did not see the tremendous, horrifying, abominable that s a hyperbole overuse of deus ex fucking machina upon your first perusal of this book. You will realize that a good epistolary book involving several different characters should have the characters be actually fucking distinct Did you seriously think this book was realistic in any way, when you cannot distinguish between the narrative of an old man, an older man, and that of a girl as she grows from her early teens Did you ever for a moment think upon the complete absurdity of the letters and the storytelling, particularly when said letters and spoken stories were told in excruciating minutiae Is that realistic in any way In your letters, have you ever once mentioned the trivialities of your evening routine, particularly when it made absolutely no relevance whatsoever to whatever point you were trying to make While I waited I poked up the fire, added another log, set out two glasses, and surveyed my desk My study also served me for a sitting room, and I made sure it was kept as orderly and comfortable as the solidity of its nineteenth century furnishings demanded I had completed a great deal of work that afternoon, supped off a plate brought up to me at six o clock, and then cleared the last of my papers. When you tell a story to your friends, have you ever once mentioned the drumming of your fingertips when you re trying to tell a story of supposedly the utmost importance I drummed my fingers on the desktop The clock in my study seemed to be ticking unusually loudly tonight, and the urban half darkness seemed too still behind my venetian blinds. I know you are young and stupid, but you are not that stupid Please don t tell me that this book fooled you in any way Did you seriously buy into the letters and the stories Fucking letters Fucking stories Bullshit attempts at letters and storytelling and an epistolary timeline that is everything overwrought, all that is overdramatic and completely devoid of sense and rationality I would beg for a little bit of sensationalism over sense, because overall, the plot of this story is entirely lacking in anything remotely resembling fascination, anything that would captivate and hold the imagination rather than lulls it to sleep. You endured over 700 pages of this balderdash for a story that doesn t even bring any sense of excitement Vlad Tepes holds no danger He is the equivalent of a grown up high school bully Once powerful, he no longer holds any amount of thrall The only remnants of his power are the few close hangers on, the few douchebags foolish enough to cling onto the remains of a long diminished power That high school bully might scare a few odd child here and there, with his posturing, with his scowls You, as an adult, are no longer afraid You, as an adult, should know better than to buy into this book s aesthetically pleasing, inconsequential claptrap. Reluctantly yours, An older, aerudite, a considerably critical Khanh

The
HISTORIAN

A Novel

ELIZABETH
KOSTOVA

New Post

The Name of the Wind
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Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?
The Once and Future King
The Night Circus
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Till We Have Faces
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Recent Post

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