



And Then You Die

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Aurelio Zen was dead to the world. Under the next umbrella, a few desirable metres closer to the sea, Massimo Rutelli was just dead.

Inspector Zen is back, but nobody's supposed to know it. After months in hospital recovering from a bomb attack on his car, he is lying low under a false name at a beach resort on the Tuscan coast, waiting to testify in an imminent anti-Mafia trial. But when an alarming number of people are dropping dead around him, it seems just a matter of time before the Mafia manages to finish the job it bungled months before on a lonely Sicilian road. The pleasant monotony of resort life is cut short as Zen finds himself transported to a remote and strange world far from home...and wherever he goes, trouble follows.

If you enjoyed the Inspector Zen Mystery series you may also like *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story* , another crime novel by Michael Dibdin.

And Then You Die Details

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Mark says

This book is one out of the series of policeman Aurelio Zen, I bought it together with a few other titles by the same writer for a few cents as they make light reading during traveling to and from work, and occasional during work. And when I say light I mean as in not very weighty in format and it does not force your brain in any excess activity.

Aurelio Zen is lying on a beach in sunny Italy recovering from a bombing of his car in the previous book, so he survived. He is being hidden away from the world, who thinks he is dead, as he will be a witness for the prosecution in the US of A against some maffia persons.

All is not well when somebody is found dead on the beach where Zen usually sits and that starts a chain of events that will see quiet a few more attempts on his life while he is been shoved around from a prison island to iceland, Rome and back to where the story started. WHen Zen finally faces the person wanting him dead. And believe it or not in this case that is actually working for Zen starting a relationship.

Not a book about detecting at all but easy and fun enough to look into Zens mind and thoughts and the Roman way of taking it easy. Life is more than a beach.

enjoyable enough.

Linda says

Having been the victim of a Mafia car bombing, Inspector Aurelio Zen is under protective custody, recuperating dejectedly at a seaside villa. Although he goes to the beach nearly every day, he's made only a single friend, Gemma, who's separated from her wealthy husband. One morning, an interloper has taken over Zen's reserved beach chair, but since the man's asleep, and Zen doesn't take such things personally, Zen obligingly finds an empty spot nearby. It's a habit that will save his life, for the man never gets up again, and when the news of the murder reaches headquarters, Zen is whisked off to another location. Soon it becomes painfully obvious that Zen is at the top of someone's hit list.

And Then You Die, like its predecessors in this series, unfolds slowly, and it takes Zen weeks of ruminating and philosophizing, as is his wont, to put 2 and 2 and 2 and 2 together. When he finally does so, he and Gemma find themselves in the position of fugitives, and the last third of the book sharply picks up the pace. A desperate flight ensues, one that at times becomes a comedy of errors. The Italian nation and its characteristics are as much a character as anyone else in these books, and Zen, being thoroughly Italian relies upon his understanding of his countrymen to extract himself from some very tight situations. There are numerous loose ends left dangling at the conclusion, and these will probably be resolved in the next Zen installment. Unfortunately, author Dibdin died in 2007, so that book, prophetically entitled End Games, is the last, alas.

Tony says

AND THEN YOU DIE. (2002). Michael Dibdin. ***.

We meet our hero – Aurelio Zen – basking on a Tuscan beach under an assumed name. He is still recovering from a recent bombing of his car that left him with disturbing, but not serious injuries. He begins to notice that people around him are dying like clockwork. They are people that he doesn't know, but they are ones who seem to look like him and have many of his characteristics. He is being hidden by the authorities – kind-of – because they need him to testify against a group of Mafioso that he had been working against for quite a while. Add in a subtle affair with a pretty woman he meets on the beach, along with his involvement with his intended killers and you have here his latest adventure. Dibdin had the ability to read the Italian character spot on, and you will enjoy his insights.

notgettingenough says

I can see why some might consider this unsatisfactory...

<http://alittleteaalittlechat.wordpress...>

Susan says

I am definitely a fan of Aurelio Zen, and this series is one of my very favorite among the mystery-set-in-Italy type. Zen is wonderfully

philosophical and the Italian background atmosphere is very well drawn.

Unlike some of the other Dibdin novels, though, there isn't as much plot in this and it is not typical. It's quite meditative since Aurelio has just returned after nearly being murdered and people - who could have been mistaken for the detective - are dying all around him.

And there is a new woman in his life too...

Rob Kitchin says

And Then You Die is a novel of two halves. The first half is an enjoyable enough read. A little slow, but interesting enough, with some nice prose and observations, and solid characterization. The second half was very disappointing. The plot, which had been okay, suddenly becomes ridiculous. And rather than there just being one strange flaw, the rest of the book is full of them, compounding the problem (and the issues are not just small, niggly things, but crucial plot devices that are simply not credible). The pace shifts from being steady and sure to a mad rush to the end, and the characterization swaps to caricature. I really don't understand the reason for this. It was as if the author had made it half way through the manuscript and then suddenly stopped believing in the story and wanted to get it over as soon as possible. A real shame as the first half was good. The second half though was a real let down.

Nathanielk says

A rare, relatively happy book for Zen. The detour to Iceland is priceless.

Dennis Fischman says

As the series goes on, it's less about finding out why people died and more about finding out how to live.

David Miller says

The good: very readable - in fact, a one-sitting read. Also, Dibdin steps outside the hardnosed materialism of so many mysteries, but still somehow in a hard-nosed way. Donald Hamilton is the only other thriller writer I know of to introduce a touch of the supernatural so nonchalantly.

Not so good: the character's motivations at the end escape me. I don't see how the beach romance at the beginning of the book so quickly grew into the life-altering thing at the end.

Excellent: the sense of place and the feeling conveyed of being in Italy and Iceland. Zen's bafflement at an American idiom and desire to remain in former imperial territories were very well played.

Jan Aldergate says

I had never read any Aurelio Zen mysteries but I was glad that I picked this up in a library book sale, so didn't pay much for it. Nothing happened, there wasn't even a mystery, and for most of the book I was confused as to what was going on. It kept referring back to previous books, and in the end I didn't really care anymore.

Roderick Hart says

In this, the eighth title in the Aurelio Zen series, our hero spots a T-shirt. On the front are the words 'Life's a Beach', on the back 'And Then You Die'. So this book takes its title from the back of a T-shirt.

The previous book in the series, Blood Rain, left several loose ends, most notably the cliff-hanger at the end which leaves the reader uncertain whether Zen has survived an explosion or not. These are tied up in this book where Zen, having spent several months recovering from his injuries, is left to recuperate by the sea. He has to do this anonymously since there is reason to believe the Mafia will kill him to prevent him testifying at a trial in the United States.

However the Mafia, if that is who it is, prove remarkably adept at tracking him down, so he is obliged to

keep on the move to stay alive and the book consists of episodes in different locations, ending up where it began – the Tuscan sea-side resort of Versilia.

One of these episodes takes him to Iceland, and it is clear that there is nothing about Iceland which Zen likes, which includes the landscape, the people, and the food. Not only that, but he sees the Icelandic equivalent of the little people (*huldufólk*, or hidden people) which few do since, according to the author, they are invisible to most. His hostility to Iceland persists after his return to Italy. Take this short dialogue (Page 155):

‘Iceland has that effect on you.’

‘Of making you drunk?’

‘Of making you need to get drunk.’

The author might explain all this as Zen’s reaction to Iceland, and we can’t assume they are his personal views, but it does seem gratuitously rude. Yes, Icelandic culture is very different from the Italian culture, which Zen so prefers, but you have to wonder what is so great about Italian culture when we read a passage like this.

‘You knew where you were in a Catholic culture: up to your neck in lies, evasions, impenetrable mysteries, double-dealing, back-stabbing and underhand intrigues of every kind.’ (Vintage edition, page 56).

As always, the book is so well written the reader can take pleasure from the prose. And as usual there is some love interest, in the form of Gemma, whom he meets at Versilia. But since this title is closely involved with its predecessor, Blood Rain should be read first.

Benjamin says

Aurelio Zen is convalescing, although powerful enemies are trying to kill him. There is an amazing, laugh-out-loud section in Iceland. Otherwise, Zen continues his downward spiral from cop to straight-up criminal. Definitely at the sillier end of this series, like *Così Fan Tutti* but with much less plot.

Sally Edsall says

This is the eighth in the Aurelio Zen series.

It is really a coda - a "what happened afterwards" - to Blood Rain (my favourite in the series). I don't believe it stands alone at all, and would not suggest this as an entry point to the Zen series. However, if you HAVE read Blood Rain, then I suggest you do read it. Despite the initially sunny and carefree setting, Zen's demons are REALLY dark, and his sanity in question, as a result of events in Blood Rain.

Fortunately, things are looking up for Zen by the end, but I have to say I was very disappointed in the plotting in the final section especially. Whereas Zen has previously used guile, subterfuge and some dubious,

even 'shady' techniques for getting himself out of trouble, I felt the actions here were too crude and simplistic, and then more closely resembled farce than displaying any plot ingenuity.

This was by far the most disappointing in the series for me, but I am glad that Zen is back!

Paul Holden says

The issue here is that this book doesn't work as a stand-alone story. It refers to the previous book in the series constantly and essentially it's just about the aftermath. This is the first Dibdin book I've read but I would read more because I liked the style and it was often engaging enough, even without a plot.

Nikki says

Very enjoyable. It read more like a segue between Blood Rain and Medusa, or maybe just a continuation of Blood Rain, than a stand alone mystery. It also had a darkly farcical aspect to it, which I found quite amusing. (I'm beginning to wonder about my sense of humor.)
