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Goodness knows, life in Southern India is tough enough for retired police sub-inspector R.M. Swaminathan and his family. After suffering a stroke while beating a suspect in the line of duty, his movement and speech are impaired and his wife and daughters are trying to make ends meet on his small pension. Worse still, the time has come when they'll have to stump up a dowry to marry off the eldest girl. Life takes a wildly unpredictable turn, though, when a white man comes plummeting from a high window to his death right in front of Swami. Who was he? Why did he fall? And what is happening to Swami, who seems to have undergone some sort of spiritual rebirth since the foreigner's dying gaze met his?

We find out most of the answers - oh, all right, just some of them - but that's not really the point when revelling in Mike Stocks' unfaltering comic voice. Whether it's the excruciating courting between daughter Jodhi and her unbearable suitor, or the way the increasingly passive and remote Swami unwittingly attracts devotees and changes the lives of those around him, *White Man Falling* is never less than highly entertaining and deliciously readable.

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