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Reddi Or Not

The latest addition to Boston's literary Pantheon.

BY GREG LALAS

Inspiration's not hard to find if you're a young writer living within miles of Hawthorne's house, Thoreau's pond, and Lehane's river. The disadvantage is, standing out is that much harder. But Brookline author Rishi Reddi, whose brilliant, elegiac story "Justice Shiva Ram Murthy" appeared in *The Best American Short Stories 2005*, proves that a strong voice will always be heard.

Reddi is the brightest light in Boston's latest literary constellation, which also includes authors like Karl Iagnemma, Atul Gawande, and Jennifer Haigh. She received a Massachusetts Cultural Council grant in 2004, and has signed a two-book deal with HarperCollins. Her debut collection, *Karma and Other Stories*, is due out in March.

Set in the Boston area, her book's interlinked stories vividly dissect and celebrate the region's Indian immigrant community. Reddi's lines combine subtlety and power, and reflect the type of naturalism you'd expect from a former environmental lawyer (the title story's hero sets out to save a bird injured after crashing into a downtown skyscraper, and winds up saving himself).

"We writers try to have this thing where other people and other people's opinions don't matter," Reddi says. "But, oh my God, c'mon? In the end, we really want to touch somebody."

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