

# Why She Does It

by Keppiehed

A glimpse into the heart of a mother.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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**Prompt:** "scramble"

**A/N:** Written for week #4 at Brigit's Flame. Thanks to Grander\_fanfics for the firstread. I always trust your opinion more than my own. This one is for Charles. :)

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She stood on the sidelines, apart from the other moms; she never had gotten the knack of smalltalk, even the easy camaraderie of sports-related jargon. She wasn't there for herself, she was there for him. To watch him.

It was still a surprise to her after all these years how different they were, the two of them—a surprise and a bit of a relief. They were opposites, but he had gotten the best of her and none of the worst. She could watch him endlessly, his variations never a bore. She knew every plane of his face, every fleck in his eye.

And yet on the field he was one of many. She could hardly tell him apart from the others as they scrambled after the ball, all limbs and budding menace. Their play was turning rougher than she would have liked to see, but wasn't that boyhood? What did she know of such things? She who inhabited the world of books and yarn. The harshest thing she ever dealt with was a knitting needle. She was ill-prepared for the tribulations of encroaching manhood.

Watching them in their play, this herd of boys, was a marvel she had missed her own time around the schoolyard. She'd had her nose tucked in a book, her myopic gaze turned inward. She was shocked to find that one such as herself could produce an athlete. The popular one. A winner, with the charming smile.

She loved him, even though his kind had been her ruin in the distant memory of days gone past.

She watched him pull ahead of the pack and score the goal, almost effortlessly. Who was this creature, with the longer limbs and knobby knees? It frightened her that his babyhood was over. Then, they'd had a complicity. His head had fit in the crook of her shoulder; the sour smell of milk was hers to wash away, as familiar as time. His rolls of fat had insulated them both from the future of hurts, had been a comfort—more to her than to him, it seemed now, as she watched him take a fall, unflinching.

Now as he walked off the field, eager to show off the mudsplatter, she covered her unease at his missing front tooth. The smell of his sweat was ever ranker, no longer the scent of a boy, but edging closer to man every day. He was changing, right before her eyes. *How was this fair, that life gave you your heart wrapped in a blanket to hold and then took back a piece from you every day, slowly, as it stretched and grew into something you couldn't recognize?*

But when he smiled, the dimple caught and the light crinkled and shone at the corners of his eyes, and she knew that she would always feel that little ball of warmth. He had his place in her—that soft spot that ached sometimes with tenderness—and that would never change. Those eyes would be the same, staring back at her, no matter how tall he got. And her heart settled back into her chest; all was right in the world again as they got into the car to go home.