

Excerpt from *The Hardest Fall*

I stopped speaking when Dylan's gloved hand—his *huge* gloved hand—cupped my cheek and gently tilted my face up. The world around me slowed down, and I stood still. I swear to you, I watched his eyes roam my face in slow motion.

“I like having your eyes on me, Zoe.”

I managed to force a nervous smile. His thumb moved on my cheek, rendering me...basically completely helpless.

Forgetting myself, forgetting where we were, I whispered, “I like watching you.”

His tongue peeked out and touched his lower lip. “I know.”

Oh, Dylan, why did you do that?

“I meant I like watching you—*liked* watching you play tonight. I didn't mean it to sound like I like watching you when you're not playing. I definitely wouldn't watch you if you were just standing there, or I don't know...I wouldn't watch you when you're working out, and I would never watch you if you were—”

“You know why I like watching you?”

The question shut me up pretty quickly, which was probably for the best; who knew what else I would spew out.

“Because I can't take my eyes away from you. Everything else...it all disappears, and...”

And... And...

“And?”

I tried my best not to look eager for his answer—or let's say not *too* eager, because there was no way he couldn't tell I was very interested and invested in hearing what he was about to say.

He let out a heavy breath and decided not to finish that particular sentence. I'd seen it in his eyes, a slight change, there and gone.