

Palestrina Pietà

by [Alea Peister](#) in the [April 2026](#) issue
Published on April 2, 2026

Your torso is the center:
a sort of dappled landscape,
ridged muscle shaping light.
I want to touch you

with my mouth, place my palm
upon the surface of your strength.
Trace each silent line with fingertips
astonished not to find you flesh.

I have never seen a man like this,
given, willing, all openness, surrender
your widening state. Such defenseless
beauty found in you

disarms me. Let me trace
each ligament of gift—your curves
and hollows, your belly's tender cavity,
the ridges at your hips, firm muscle

just above your heart. Just as stone
here is not quite stone
your death depicted cannot quite
convince me it is death.