

# Changing of the Guards

Patti Smith

Sixteen years  
Sixteen banners united over the field  
Where the good shepherd grieves  
Desperate men, desperate women divided  
Spreading their wings 'neath falling leaves.

Fortune calls  
I stepped forth from the shadows to the marketplace  
Merchants and thieves, hungry for power, my last deal gone down  
She's smelling sweet like the meadows where she was born  
On midsummer's eve near the tower.

The cold-blooded moon  
The captain waits above the celebration  
Sending his thoughts to a beloved maid  
Whose ebony face is beyond communication  
The captain is down but still believing that his love will be repaid.

They shaved her head  
She was torn between Jupiter and Apollo  
A messenger arrived with a black nightingale  
I seen her on the stairs and I couldn't help but follow  
Follow her down past the fountain where they lifted her veil.

I stumbled to my feet  
I rode past destruction in the ditches  
With the stitches still mending beneath a heart-shaped tattoo  
Renegade priests and treacherous young witches  
Were handing out the flowers that I'd given to you.

The palace of mirrors  
Where dog soldiers are reflected  
The endless road and the wailing of chimes  
The empty rooms where her memory is protected  
Where the angel's voices whisper to the souls of previous times.

She wakes him up  
Forty-eight hours later the sun is breaking  
Near broken chains, mountain laurel and rolling rocks  
She's begging to know what measures he now will be taking  
He's pulling her down and she's clutching on to his long golden locks.  
Gentlemen, he said I don't need your organization, I've shined your shoes  
I've moved your mountains and marked your cards  
But Eden is burning either brace yourself for elimination  
Or else your hearts must have the courage for the changing of the guards.

Peace will come  
With tranquility and splendor on the wheels of fire  
But will bring us no reward when her false idols fall  
And cruel death surrenders with its pale ghost retreating  
Between the King and the Queen of Swords.