

## Rebecca Falcon in Europe

Germany journalist Stefan Scheytt visited USA in spring 2008, responsibly collected information from involved persons and in February and March 2009 published several articles about juveniles and children sentenced to life without parole; the articles and photos were published at the title pages of Germany and Swiss magazines and newspapers. Below you can read the English translation of the interview with Rebecca Falcon as it was published in Badische Zeitung Magazin; the Germany text can be found at the websites quoted below.

Rebecca Falcon, today 27, is sitting on a concrete-bank in the garden of the Lowell Correctional Institute for women in Ocala. She was born at Christmas time and she sings with a strong and firm voice. She has long undulating hair, full lips, she has a well-built stature. If she lived in a village, she would sing proudly and in a loud voice in the first row of the church choir. Somebody is washing Jesus' foots with tears in her song, one talks about fear and pain, about former life when inmate sinned, love and salvation is at the end. In a few weeks, Rebecca Falcon will sing this song with the prison band in face of more than hundred inmates. The song is only a smaller part of a long theatre performance entitled "A real life story about a girl named Lovely". Rebecca is the author of the performance and she narrates her own story.

Her mother, her grandmother, her stepfather, her friends, the judge pronouncing sentence 'life without parole', death in prison and also demons and angels are in the story. Rebecca Falcon stands at the altar at one moment and the devil says to Jesus: "You can't have her, she is a bad woman." And Jesus answers: "Yes, she was bad, but I restored her."



Rebecca Falcon lives the tenth year among bars now. She says: "I was permanent deranged during the first five years. I was incurive, I spared and jangled." She spent long weeks in separate confinement, 23 hours a day in a cell as small as a toilet, because she berated the wardress, she shouted at them, she rolled about on the floor because of rage. She shows her right forearm: "I did injuries myself, with razor blades, nails, scissors, with her own fingernails." She smiles: "I have good skin – my scars nearly disappeared. I didn't injury myself more, since they rescued me three years ago."

In her havenless situation, Rebecca found a new starting-point in faith. One has not many choices if as a young woman for life sentenced was. Meal with frozen pieces of tuna fish for lunch – for life, unpleasant odors and smack of plates that are not often washed with soap, to wake up at 5.30 every day – for the rest of one's life; one can have a shower by itself never more, the breakfast mustn't take more than 20 minutes; inspection and counting of inmates five times per day – and if one already sleeps at the time of the evening inspection at 22.30, he/she is waken up and must stand up. There are many senseless rules: what socks to wear, what color of eye-shadows and eyelids are allowed.

"God helped me to find a beneficial life, I'm busy for the whole day," says Rebecca Falcon. She works like auxiliary worker in the community of inmates. She performs administrative work; she organizes scriptural lessons and celebration of masses. She and her four friends are like a family, she called them "my Christian sisters". The eldest is 62, "we called her mom, and Jesus is our dad." The job in the community

helped her, she got a double cell, she has her own lighting at her bed, and a bit of privacy. It is completely different from a big sleeping hall where 100 or 150 other women cry, sob, blow nose, talk, quarrel, and rave, where women put their shirts over face to screen the light during sleeping. The pertinence to the Christian substitute family helps Rebecca Falcon at least a bit to pass the fact that she is nearly without any contact with her mom and with her three younger brothers. "I miss them since my 15. I could see my mom only three hours over the last two years. She lives far away and she can't afford so long journey." Perhaps, her faith allows her to pass the fact that she may never embrace or kiss a man, excluding a visitor in welcoming and leave-taking; that she must keep down her sexuality for the rest of her life.

However, her faith gives her hope and promise, that's sure; similar to hope to win toss. "If it is God's intention that I must stay here up to the end of my life, nothing can be

changed. But God make wonders. Every morning I wake up with the idea that somebody call: 'Rebecca Falcon, take all your things, your data disappeared somehow from computer, it's beyond reason, but you can go home.' I dream about it and I believe that God gives me the second chance."

Her first chance, when she as "a girl called Lovely" on the other side of walls was, was not the true chance. The beginning was that she nobody regard her as "lovely" – because she was chubby and she had thick spectacle glass. When she 6 was, the fiancée of her mother, who later her stepfather is, pawed her; when she told it to her mother and grandmother, they didn't believe it. At her 12 she had sex for the first time with a boy; at 13 she was assaulted by her schoolmate and by his four acquaintances; at 14, one of her friends says her to face and in public she is a hustler and a bitch that gives him sex whenever he wants. "I never dared to tell him 'no', even if I didn't want, I believed he loves me," she tells. Already at that time she injured her forearm, she began to drink spirits like her mother and she swallowed her pills against pain. At 15 she attempted to suicide. Her mother and her stepfather, a crude warder, were unable to find any other solution than to send her to grandmother in Florida, far away from Kansas where everything could have been better.



And even worse time falls. She got under the thumb of group of elder boys again. "I didn't want to injure myself and that's why I became hard and harder. I drank, I was listening to the hardest rap, and we were very rude to each other." So, at one November night 1997, Rebecca Falcon, she was 15, and her 18-year-old friend got on a cab, she was intoxicated from whisky, he had his gun, and because nobody wanted to admit fear, they carried out their spontaneous and unprompted idea to rob the cabdriver – he was killed by one gunshot. The court never cleared up who fired the death-shot and both teenagers were convicted to life without parole. Rebecca Falcon is in contact with the cabdriver widow and she now says that the penalty was too harsh for a 15-age girl.



*(Written by: Stefan Scheytt | Photos: Cira Moro | English Translation: Michal Horák)*

[http://www.focus.de/panorama/reportage/tid-13203/focus-reportage-amerika-gnadenlos\\_aid\\_361140.html](http://www.focus.de/panorama/reportage/tid-13203/focus-reportage-amerika-gnadenlos_aid_361140.html)

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