

SPAIN

Ella (She)

by Marika Puicher





Spain, Fuelabrada (Madrid). Eli having a walk in a park together with her family.



Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli's mother, a former beautician, helps her daughter to shave her eyebrows.

Ella (She)

Ella is a long term project, started in 2014 and still in progress, that describes the most significant stages of the growth of Elian Angel Ruiz, a transexual adolescent from Madrid.

Eli, as friends and family call her, lives in Madrid with her family. I first met and photographed her when she was ten years old and little more than a child. I returned to Madrid in the following years - when Eli was eleven, fifteen and then eighteen - where I stayed for several weeks, living in close contact with Eli to document her daily life and the highlights of her growth. Over the years, a strong and sincere human bond was created with his entire family, based on the consciousness of a common battle, that for the right to be oneself. When Eli was only two, her parents realised that their son felt like a girl and that her biological sex didn't match with her genre identity. At first her parents were concerned about this behaviour, but finally they understood that the most important thing was for their child to be happy and free to be what she desired. At age 9, Fernando officially became Elian - the male name has been changed on all her documents - and at 11 she started taking a testosterone-suppressor, a medicine with reversible

effects. At the age of 13, Eli began taking estrogen in order to adapt her body to her gender identity, and at the age of 18, in 2022, she underwent sex-change surgery. Several recent studies show that suicide rates among adolescents and trans adults are far higher in the rest of the population. One of the main causes can be traced to a life spent suffering constant repression from family members and a society that still tends to discriminate against them. Eli's mother is the coordinator of families of transgender youth at the COGAM association in Madrid, which is committed to helping these minors grow up without stress in a society that recognizes their rights. Today Eli is a strong and aware woman, she takes part in several events for LGBTQ+ People's rights, studies international relations, and dreams of having a family, while her main aim in life is to be happy.strong and aware woman, she takes part in several events for LGBTQ+ People's rights, studies international relations, and dreams of having a family, while her main aim in life is to be happy.



Spain, Madrid. The family album with photos of Elli's childhood.



Spain. Eli when she was 11, in a small square of Lavapiés district in Madrid.



Spain, Madrid, Dr. Jesus Lago Institute. Elian is assisted by her mother during a postoperative sickness, after undergoing a long sex-change surgery.

Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli,
15 years old.





Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli during a volleyball lesson. Eli plays in a female volleyball



Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli and her brother Natcho help to prepare the dinner.

Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli
combs her hair





Spain, Madrid, Dr. Jesus Lago Institute. Elian is assisted by her mother during a postoperative sickness, after undergoing a long sex-change surgery.



Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli's belly with the estrogen patch. Eli has been taking female hormones since she was 13 to adapt her body to her gender identity.



Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli, 15 years old, and her brother Natcho, 12, in their bedroom.

Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli while her mother puts nail polish on her nails.





Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli, her brother Natcho and their mother in the livingroom of their apartment.



Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli in a square near her home.

Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli, 15 years old.





Spain, Madrid. Eli with Axel, a 10-year-old transsexual boy. Axel's parents are members of the COGAM association and are fighting for the rights of transsexual children.

Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli does her homework. Eli attends the last year of the Educación Secundaria Obligatoria - E.S.O. (compulsory secondary education).





Spain, Madrid. Eli when she was 11, sitting on Angela's laps. Both Elli and Angela are transsexuals. They are biologically male but have always felt females. Angela is a volunteer of the Spanish Chrysalis, which welcomes and helps parents of trans children.



Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli, 15 years old, is wearing her new dress.



Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli, 15 years old, and her brother Natcho, 12, in their bedroom.



Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli has dinner with her brothers Natcho, 12, and Jaime, 17.



Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli during a volleyball lesson. Eli plays in a female volleyball team.

Spain, Fuenlabrada (Madrid). Eli, 15
years old.



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