

## Growing Up A Girl:

As a child, I was always happy -- well, most of the time anyway -- and I felt relatively normal all through elementary school. By the time I went to junior high, though, my normal didn't feel so normal any more. For one thing, I was a late bloomer and I started to have some real doubts about myself, when I saw the changes all the other girls were going through.

I remember Mama asking me, "Honey, what's the matter? You seem so quiet today. Is everything okay?" Once *that* door was opened, I ran through it at full speed ... metaphorically speaking, of course. What follows is the conversation between Mama and me that day ... and it's a poem in *Barking Spiders 2*, page 13.



### Mama, Am I Pretty?

Mama, am I pretty?  
"Why do you ask?" she said.  
She held me gently to her,  
and kissed me lightly on my head.

"Your clothes are neatly ironed.  
Your face and hands are clean.  
You're such a sweet child, little one,  
what does your question mean? "

Mama, am I pretty?  
I *really* need to know.  
Am I pretty like the other girls  
at school where we all go?

"You have a very loving heart,  
You're gentle, kind and good.  
Your friends all think the world of you,  
anybody would."

But, Mama, am I pretty?  
Sometimes, kids point or stare.  
I've got these real thick glasses  
that I wish I didn't wear.

Mama said my time would come,  
be patient and I'd see.  
The things that really matter  
were there, inside of me.

But, **Mama! Am I pretty?**  
(I didn't mean to shout).  
Then Mama smiled and told me,  
"Sweetheart, yes, inside and out."