I was settling into bed the other night with a good book when my husband Jason stuck his head in the door.

“You know what James just said to me,” he asked. “He said, ‘Daddy, you’re my best friend.’”

Instantly, my heart melted. The same child who was beating a broken plastic golf club over my coffee table minutes earlier somehow magically transformed into a sweet little angel with just five words.

I could tell by the grin on Jason’s face that his heart had melted too. As Jason left the room to play with James, I began to think about all the fun things that a father and son do together. It didn’t take long to see why James thinks so highly of Jason to title him “best friend.”

After we pick James up from daycare and head home after work, both of them start ripping their clothes off the second we walk through the door. School and work clothes are left bundled on the floor. Pants with holes in the knees, stained T-shirts and camouflaged ball caps are the new attire.

After grabbing a quick snack and hugging me goodbye, the two head out the door on some adventure. They won’t return until the sun goes down. And when they do return, they are either muddy from head to toe or they smell like fish.

James does hang out with me too. But it’s usually to help Mommy do some sort of chore. We like to color pictures for Daddy. Sitting in my lap to read a book is another one of his favorites. But it’s all about Daddy when it comes to the really fun, down and dirty, stuff.

The two even gang up on me for various jokes and pranks. It’s almost as if Jason has traveled back in time to his boyhood.

The two will hide behind a wall to throw some slime on me. Then the two will run into the bedroom, laughing their heads off while I stand in silence with a sticky mess in my hair.

Or the two will spend half a road trip telling me that I smell like rotten eggs or accuse me of burping or other bodily functions.

They spend the other half of the road trip laughing about how they really pulled one over on me.

It seems that James wants Mommy time when it involves a scraped knee, a bump on the head or a cut finger. He enjoys our time together when he is ready to cuddle and exchange hugs. He will even pile all his toy trucks in front of me for an impromptu “truck show.” It’s almost as if he likes showing off for me.

I admit that I kind of like the way James has it set up. I can bandage a wound in seconds. I can wipe a face before he realizes what hit him. I prefer soft hugs and kisses over stomach

shots and calf kicks and wrestling matches.
Some things are just meant for Daddy.
Daddy knows just what sound a dinosaur makes. He is good at baiting a worm on a hook. He is better than me at crossing winding creeks. He can handle icky slime to throw on unsuspecting victims. And his antics and innocent name-calling games are funnier than mine.
There will come a time when James will be too big for truck shows. Slime throwing will be too childish. And hanging out with Mommy and Daddy may seem uncool.
But I believe that James will always remember when Daddy was his best friend. And it shouldn’t take much for him to realize he still is.
I guess I should accept the fact that I should always be on the lookout for flying goo. No matter if I did or not, I will be accused of some gross sound.
And I will never tire of hearing those two laughing as they run off to hide...at any age.