

**Disclaimer:** I don't own Castle.

**A/N:** See, I can be nice to them. Just an extremely small follow up to 08x18.

**Summary:** A conversation between the boys and Haley about Castle.

### **"Friends"**

"Hey guys," Haley said approaching the two detectives in the bullpen. "I wanted to thank you for the help. You guys could have arrested me but you believed-"

"No we didn't," Esposito cut her.

"Excuse me?" Haley asked confused.

"Castle believed in you, and convinced the three of us to give you a chance. I'm glad we did. But you need to know who went to bat for you."

Haley nodded, "I know he did. But I wanted to thank you anyway, even if you were doing it for Rick."

"You're welcome, and be careful," Ryan said simply.

"How so?" she asked once again confused.

Esposito shuffled uncomfortably and started, "Castle believes in people. That's just who he is. He sees good in people first. I wish I was more like that. I have to confess that I believe in the evidence first, even over friends I've known for years. And then I feel like an ass when the evidence proves what I should have known all along," he winces remembering all the occasions Castle himself had been the victim of his skepticism. "But Castle is the other extreme. He believes in people until there is no denying their guilt anymore."

"Like Damian Westlake, for instance," Ryan remembered bitterly. Castle had truly believed his friend was innocent and Ryan had felt offended on his behalf that Damian wasn't just guilty but had tried to manipulate Castle.

"My point is, don't take advantage of that, because as I've pointed out before, I can be quick to become an ass, and you don't want to see me become an ass 'cause you hurt my friend," Esposito finished staring intently at Haley.

"I won't," Haley promised seriously. She hadn't known what to think of the two detectives at times. They seemed to be Rick's friends but then they'd tease him merciless, borderline offensive, and then they'd clearly taken Kate's side on the separation. Granted she had the advantage of knowing why Kate left, which they didn't, but still. At the time she hadn't really known where they stood with Rick. But she realized Esposito was telling her where they stood. He was an ass at times, with his friends, that didn't mean they weren't his friends and if he thought she was a threat to Rick, he would act accordingly and defend his friend. As she told Wesley, she liked this new life, friends. Friends you could count on, even when they were being asses. She smiled and winked at them.

"So, I hear there's this great bar we can go to. I know the owner, my treat, as a thank you and to get to know my new friends better."

"We never say no to free drinks," Ryan smiled getting his jacket.

“You guys do know Castle never charges us right, so you can’t really treat us-“

“ESPO!”

“Just pointing out-“

“It’s a gesture,” Ryan rolled his eyes and Haley shook her head as the three headed towards the elevator, from her office Kate smiled at the three squabbling retreating figures. Yeah, the family was getting bigger and she and Rick were still mom and dad.