Lizzie had a custom ringtone for Jane—it was, strangely enough, “Love in this Club” by Usher. Charlotte had changed it as a joke awhile back, and Lizzie hadn’t fixed it yet. It was a bit too fun to play the song obnoxiously for Jane at odd moments during the string of formal events and awkward parties in the weeks leading up to the wedding. And really, it wasn’t even that obnoxious—having Caroline Lee and their mother in the same room at all was reason enough for some stress relief. Lizzie certainly wasn’t expecting to hear the ringtone that night in LA, though. She picked up the phone.

“Jane?”

“Hey, Lizzie!” Jane replied, sounding strangely energetic. “What’s up?”

“Not much… I’m just…reading a book in my apartment.”

“Oh, reading a book? That’s cool,” she said in that exuberant tone that reminded Lizzie just the tiniest bit of Lydia. “So what else is new?”

“Um—“
“You doing any new stuff? Like, um—Darcy! How’s Darcy—I mean, not that you’re doing Darcy, that’s not what I meant to…I mean, it’s ok if you are—um… How’s the start up?”


“Yes?”

“Why are you calling me in the middle of the night the day after your honeymoon?” There was another pause. “Jane?”

“Lizzie, I’m just—I’m kind of home alone in the new house, and it’s really…big.”

“How are you kind of home alone?”

“It’s silly. We kept joking on the trip about how the food was great but we really just wanted some Chinese from Golden Wok.”

“Ok.”

“And Bing is actually friends with the owner.”

“Of course.”

“So I guess he asked him if he could make our order and hold onto it, just in case we got back in town before they closed? And we did, and I said it wasn’t a big deal, but Bing said he wanted our first night in the house to be perfect…so Bing is driving downtown to pick up the food. Because apparently they don’t deliver at…11:30 on a Tuesday night.”

“Wow.” Lizzie had one of those unavoidable moments of thankfulness that Darcy and Bing were so different. She felt guilty for thinking it, but really, she wouldn’t have been able to handle Bing’s habit of spontaneously getting Jane sentimental gifts and little surprises what seemed like every other day. Lizzie just would’ve felt perpetually in debt. “You know he’ll probably only be gone for like, 20 minutes, right?”

“I know. I’m supposed to be unpacking my suitcase but, Lizzie, it’s just so weird in here.”

“How is it weird?”

“It’s just so big and white and empty. I felt like we had a million boxes, but they barely take up half of the family room. How can everything we own not even take up the whole family room?”

“An open floor plan?” Lizzie quipped.

“Lizzie.”

“Sorry. You know, you really didn’t have to take the house,” Lizzie said before she could stop herself. She still couldn’t get over the fact that the Lees had bought Jane and Bing a giant house as a surprise engagement present. Apparently they had employed Caroline to sound out the neighborhoods and designs they liked (a task Lizzie was sure Caroline had just loved), but still. Who does that? And why hadn’t Jane put her foot down before they closed?

“Lizzie, they said they wanted to show their support for our marriage and welcome me into their family. Bing’s dad said that, and you know how he is. How was I supposed to tell them no?” Lizzie forced herself to let it drop. She knew that being welcomed into the Lee family hadn’t been the easiest process. And it was the day after her sister’s honeymoon, after all.
“Ok, ok. Well, you could always do some sock slides,” Lizzie said encouragingly. “There’s that long hallway, right?”

“Yeah…”

“What?”

“I don’t know; it’ll be better when we start unpacking everything tomorrow.”

“Probably.”

“It’s just so spooky.”

“Hmm.”

“You remember that time in middle school when Mom and Dad took Lydia to that horseback riding camp?” Lizzie laughed a little.

“Yeah, that was the beginning of Lydia’s long career of terrorizing ponies.”

“Remember how we had all those plans for what we were going to do that night when we were home alone, and then everything just seemed so big and creepy without anyone else home that we didn’t actually do any of them?” Lizzie smiled.

“Yeah, yeah I do. I think you said you heard a noise or something and then we both got freaked out.”

“Well, that’s what this feels like.”

“Ok,” Lizzie conceded. “I guess that’s pretty creepy.”

“It is.”

“Didn’t—“ Lizzie reminisced, “didn’t we end up building a giant fort in your room? Out of all our sheets and both of our mattresses somehow?”

“We did! It was huge! We spent the whole rest of the night in there, right?”

“Yeah, yeah we did. Because I remember it got really hot but we didn’t want to turn off the flashlights.”

“Dad probably had the air conditioning off to make up for Mom and Lydia always wanting it at 65.”

“Yeah, probably.” There was a pause.

“Too bad we can’t make a fort tonight.”

“Yeah. I’m pretty sure a fort would make my student loans go away,” Lizzie opined. Jane laughed a little.

“It might make Mom stop hinting to Darcy about how she wouldn’t mind another wedding soon.”

“Oh gosh, don’t start,” Lizzie groaned. There were some sounds on Jane’s end, and she heard another voice.

“Oh, Bing’s back!” Bing said something indistinct, and Jane giggled in response, suddenly
sounding at ease again. “…It does smell good! I had no idea I was so hungry. …Sorry, Lizzie! I got a little distracted.”

“No problem; go, go, enjoy your dinner!” They said their goodbyes, and Lizzie asked Jane to put Bing on the phone before she hung up.

“Hey Bing,” she said casually.

“Hey, what’s up, Lizzie?”

“Look, I know your parents were kind enough to buy you guys the haunted mansion and all, but there’s still something important that I need you to do for Jane.” Bing laughed uncertainly.

“Ok?”

“Make that woman a fort.”

End Notes

I hope the Lee’s buying them a house isn’t too far-fetched--it just seemed like something that parents as generous as Bing and as manipulative as Caroline might do.

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