DAVID+CLARA: Architect, Caregiver, Crazy

(DAVID is hunched over his drafting table under extreme time pressure. CLARA is playing on the floor of the office, childlike. During the scene, she consistently invades his space, using objects freely and disrupting his meticulously ordered professional universe.)

ASSISTANT
Two more signatures here and here...
The printer is running.
DAVID
It's a slow day;
I'll be out as soon as I can.
Thanks.
(ASSISTANT leaves)
CLARA
I want to dance.
Would you dance with me?
Like you used to– right now?
DAVID
I need to finish, give me five minutes.
CLARA
Meow! Please?
DAVID
Please.
You were up every two hours again last night.
How do you have so much energy now?
CLARA
Meow.
I love you, that's why.
DAVID
I love you too.
(without looking up, continuing to draw frantically)
We won't be playing music in the office. I need a minute of stillness to think.
CLARA
Fine. Don't blink.
I'll just play over here by myself.
Why, oh why won't you play with me?
DAVID
Work.
CLARA
What's that? I see you drawing.
DAVID
Work.
CLARA
You're drawing!
DAVID
It's work.

ASSISTANT
(opening the door)
Sir, the client—
DAVID

– I know. Please give me five minutes.
ASSISTANT
I'll make coffee.
CLARA
Bitter!
DAVID
Coffee...
CLARA
Bitter!
DAVID
...thanks!
CLARA
Zoom!
ASSISTANT
(closing the door)
Of course.
CLARA
(giggling)
Zoom, zoom! Look at them go! The cars are on the highway!
We need to clear the road before the snow falls.
DAVID
Clara, please. Just give me some quiet.
CLARA
David! Look at them go.
ASSISTANT
(opening the door)
The client is on the way up.
DAVID
Please delay!
There's lots of traffic today.
ASSISTANT
I'll say you're on a call.
Will that be all?
DAVID
Yes, yes.
(to CLARA, seeing some chaos of hers and rushing over to fix things)
No, no!

CLARA
(meanwhile happily arranging his markers)
Red and green are having a fight.
Blue's next to orange; we know that's not right.
DAVID
(moving objects back to their places the moment she lets go)
Let's leave things as they are, please.
Daddy needs to work.
CLARA
Okay, okay...Daddy!
We won't dance today.
DAVID
(trying to see what she has in her hands)
Sweetheart...?
CLARA

(throwing a stack of papers into the air, then jumping around)
Because it’s snowing in the office!
It’s a snow day for us!
Look at the little houses.
The world is our snow globe,
it sure is getting cold.
No wonder there’s traffic.
I’d snuggle with you, but you’re “working” —
(arranging objects to her liking)
There! Now the tree has a bed.

DAVID
Good, Clara. Keep the trees safe.
Just stay on the floor. Don't touch the ink.
I need some calm, I need time to think...

CLARA
I need to dance, among other things.

ASSISTANT
(looking in again)
Sir, the client mentioned...

DAVID
I know.

ASSISTANT
...he can only give us fifteen minutes...

DAVID
Clara: NO!

ASSISTANT
...before his next meeting.

DAVID
Thank you. Apologize for my greeting.
Be hospitable. I’m almost there.

ASSISTANT
Understood. I'll handle it.

DAVID
(checking his messages)
Forty minutes delayed. My God, what will I do?

CLARA
(tilting her head, looking at him with total innocence)
David? Listen to that music.
Would you like to dance with me? Just one dance.

DAVID
Clara, I just answered you. I can’t dance right now. I’m working.

CLARA
I love this song, it’s always been my favorite.
Please— we have to dance!

DAVID
It’s just the printer, sweetheart. Please don’t; let me work.

CLARA
But I love this song...

ASSISTANT
Sir, the client's getting impatient. He’s asking if he can come in now.

CLARA

Show him in.
DAVID
Just two more minutes, please! Thank you.

CLARA
Please, thank you, please, thank you! Thank you, please.
(tugging gently at DAVID's sleeve as the ASSISTANT exits)
David? They're playing our song.
Dance with me! Just this one time.
DAVID
THERE IS NO SONG! It's the printer!
Clara, stop! You'll ruin the master.
Let go of my sleeve!
I can't smudge this, it needs to be perfect.
CLARA
Perfect?
(reaching for his master blueprint)
No, no, no! It's too flat!
DAVID
Stop it, you menace. Go away!
CLARA
I'll go play...
Good night!

ASSISTANT
(looking in again)
Sir? Is everything all right?
DAVID
(going over to the door)
Her caretaker is stuck in traffic.
She says she'll be here soon.

CLARA
(at his desk, scribbling and drawing wildly)
No, no, no! It's too flat! Houses need windows! Houses need trees!
Let's paint a forest right over your straight little lines!
DAVID
(wrenching the marker out of her hand)
Clara, stop! Don't touch that! You're ruining the master copy!
Let go of the page! Please, I can't replace this draft.
CLARA
(violently defensive—slapping at him, scratching and clawing at the blueprints to rip them apart)
GET OFF ME! It's my house! You're stealing my house!
You locked me out! Thief! Monster!
Somebody, help!
DAVID
I can't let it tear! Clara, please calm down.
This pays for the doctors! This pays for your life!
Let go! Just let go!
CLARA
(ever more violent)
NO! NO! I HAVE TO GO HOME! I HAVE TO GO HOME!

DAVID
There is no home! You *are* home!
Stop it! Just—STOP!

(DAVID grabs her wrists and flings CLARA away from the table to protect the remaining paper. She has been trying to bite and kick and hit him, but he loses control and shoves her with too much force. CLARA crashes backward against a shelving unit. A heavy glass inkwell shatters on the floor. She gasps, clutching her wrist on the floor. Her violent mania is gone. She looks at DAVID with the whimpering, petrified terror of a child...The CLIENT has entered at the peak moment of chaos. A pregnant pause, then brusk exit from the office, followed closely by the ASSISTANT.)

DAVID
(staring down at his hands, horrified)
Clara...
Oh God. My Clara, no.
CLARA
(whimpering, backing away on the floor)
Don't... don't hurt me. Please. I want my husband.
Where is David? Where did he go?
DAVID
(falling to his knees, weeping)
I'm here. I'm so sorry.
The project, my future...
What have I done?
I'm here...
CLARA
David, we remodeled again this year.
(pointing out the ink smears everywhere)
I like the shadows you added.
DAVID
The shadows...?

(CLARA recovers, studying the ruinous state of the office with innocent interest. Things have been thrown everywhere: smashed, spattered, sprawled out mess abounds. DAVID's tidy, controlled universe is unrecognizable. Her terror vanishes, replaced by a wide, genuine, childlike grin. She has noticed a humorous absurdity, completely out of place.)

CLARA
Look, David! Look at that!
Right there in the middle of your mess!
There it is, smiling at us.
DAVID
(caught entirely off guard by the absurdity)
A... what?
CLARA
(giggling hysterically)
Trying so hard to look important...
Don't think too hard, just look!
It's a very good design, Dave. Better than yours.
DAVID
(laughing freely with her)
The client was here... and we built that.
(They both laugh, holding hands. Cathartic, genuine humor breaks the spell of tragedy.)