BENNY & SHANTELLE SIDE

SHANTELLE

Baba? Baba? Baba?

SHANTELLE stops and looks at the tree and then heads towards the stairs and up to the observatory.

SHANTELLE

Baba!

BENNY

Hey, Schnega-Booga.

SHANTELLE

Baba, Grammy's gonna get mad that you cut down a tree isn't she? I thought you're not supposed to work anymore. You're unemployed.

BENNY

Almost, sweetie. I’m retired.

(beat)

SHANTELLE

Hey, aren't these Grammy's special ornaments? Why are they smushed? Oooo, you're gonna be in trouble.

BENNY

Um, there were extreme temperature changes in the garage. Some really, "sciency" stuff. I'll explain it to you more when you’re older.

He looks at an astronomy book over at his desk.

SHANTELLE

Baba, how come Grammy always says, "East-side" when she meets her friends.

BENNY

Well she was raised on the Eastside of Detroit.

SHANTELLE

Were you raised on the "East-side" of Detroit?

BENNY

God no. I'm "West-side."

SHANTELLE

That's where you were born?

BENNY

No, I was actually born down in Mississippi. Moved up here when I was about 15. Part of what they call the Great Migration.

SHANTELLE

What's that?

BENNY

Well, that was a period of time when Black folk, people that looked like you and me, they moved out their hometowns in the south and moved up here to the North.

SHANTELLE

Why?

BENNY

Because sometimes...sometimes people are afraid of what they don't understand. They get afraid of people they don't know. And when people get afraid, they can be pretty mean.

SHANTELLE

Were they mean to you?

BENNY

A bit.

SHANTELLE

Baba, why does Grammy always wear such colorful clothes?

BENNY

Well, you see, she’s a designer, an artist really, so she’s always trying to brighten up our world.

SHANTELLE

Hmm. Baba, why do you spend so much time up here with your tel-e-scape?

BENNY

Got all the questions tonight, don'tcha baby girl. Well, this is a "telescope.” And, I can see things through it

SHANTELLE

What do you see?

BENNY

All kinds of things. I can see the moon and planets.

SHANTELLE

And shooting stars?

BENNY

Sometimes. I see a lot of satellites.

SHANTELLE

Satellites? What are those?

BENNY

It's like a little ball of technology that gets shot up into outer space and then they circle round and round and the guys at NASA, our space guys, they talk to ‘em.

SHANTELLE

Do they ever wear out?

BENNY

After sixty or seventy years.

SHANTELLE

And then they send them to outer-outer space?

BENNY

(Star fields come up on screen as part of the background reminiscent of the Overture.)

Yeah, sort of. But on a real clear night when space is deep, and deep and deep and black I can look through my telescope, and I can see galaxies miles and miles away.

SHANTELLE

Wow! Whole galaxies!