

# *Lobster Tales*

A One Hour Documentary  
Researched and Written by  
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Producer: Artemis International

Director: Celia Tait

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# Lobster Tales

## Treatment

(Reading Note by Sarah Rossetti: This documentary has altered in the making, as they always do. This document represents most of the pre-production treatment submitted by myself, as the sole researcher/writer, and it includes my post-production revisions to the narration.)

It's October, and the tiny coastal town of Two Rocks (an hour's drive north of Perth) is celebrating the opening of the Cray fishing season, but beneath the surface, the CRAYFISH don't know it . . . yet. In their limestone dens, hundreds of these gregarious creatures socialise, the lighter-coloured adolescents probing and chasing, grasping and clasping each other with tail flips and rasping antennae. SFX: The distorted sound of unintelligible human hubbub and burbling diesel engines gradually infiltrates the watery atmosphere. The sound increases as we approach the source – the hulls of Cray boats, and punch through.

For a moment we're in both worlds – that of the Cray and of the Fisher-Folk. The water beneath us laps against the sides of Cray boats. Hairy legs hang over the side. Raucous laughter assaults us, then someone yells, "Here they come!"

A procession of FISHER-FOLK wind their way to the sea behind a Catholic PRIEST in full robes, with 'Rocky' the Rock Lobster – the bright red man-sized mascot (which launched the World Swimming Championships) gaily taking up the rear. On the edge of the marina, a choir of SCHOOL CHILDREN sing a song of hope for a big catch. At their feet is a giant Crayfish puppet, made from twisted steel and paper mache.

A reverent hush descends as the Priest approaches the marina. Festooned Cray boats of REVELERS bob on the water, edging closer now, as if straining to hear. They are bedecked with palms fronds, Cray Fishermen and friends (some dressed as Pirates) and streamers.

ANDY ANDROSS is there, on his battered Cray boat, *Indian Warrior*. Andy has a hair lip, tattoos, and a beer in his hand. He puts down his beer, and yells for his raucous friends to dry up. He wants to hear this! It might do them good to get closer to the man up top (God).

WARRYN BRAITHWAITE steadies the neighbouring up-market Vinci boat, *Mare Nostrum*, and fondly scans the pomp and rabble all around him. This is his first Blessing at Two Rocks, and his excited daughter shares the deck with some of Warryn's champagne-drinking friends.

As the Priest gesticulates and yells his Blessing for a great catch and a safe return to all the Fishermen, PAUL "PUMPER" PARKIN takes another beer from his boat's supply, climbs on his load of Cray Pots to get a better view, and smiles at the women on the marina.

The Blessing complete, a mighty cheer goes up from land and sea, followed by streamers and fireworks flashing in brilliant neon over the waters.

Beneath the surface, the CRAYFISH are beginning to crawl out of their reef ledges, to feed in their nocturnal world. SFX: The boom of the fireworks is muffled here, but noticeable.

Super Title: *Lobster Tales* over a big Lobster warily eyeing the splashes of colour filtering down from above.

Series of VOX POPS, selecting from the following:

Vince Basille (old Italian Fisherman) on Basille Island: "Fishing's born in you."

Sam Scarpuzza (old Italian Fisherman) on Basille Island: "The sea *attract-a* you."

Andy Andross (rough and ready Fisherman) on *Indian Warrior* at Two Rocks "Got into it by pure accident. I done a midnight flit, and ended up on a Cray boat."

Jane Liddon (Abrolhos Fisherwoman) repairing her Pots: “I hugged a big Cray once. Put it’s legs right around me.”

Mitch Clarkson (New Age Chef) in a bandana at his *Le Rat Café* on the Abrolhos Islands: “There must be a mass intelligence which controls them.”

Jason Ward (Truckie) in a Vinci Cray Truck: “You can’t respect a creature that for 50 years keeps getting into the same Pot and hauled up. You’d think it would get bred out of them.”

Max Cramer (Professional Diver) in a cave on his underwater scooter: “You have to think like a Cray.”

Paul “Pumper” Parkin (rough and ready Fisherman) on the marina in the pre-dawn moonlight: “Crays don’t crawl when there’s a full moon.”

Frank Ang in his up-market Chinese restaurant: “Good luck to start Chinese New Year with Lobster.”

Robert McCaffrey (Costume Designer) with his Blessing of the Fleet costumes: “It’s terrible how they boil them alive, poor things. They’re spacey.”

Andrew Cowan (Amateur Diver) with the Crays at Underwater World: “I swap them with me Mum for a few fruit cakes.”

Bernard King and the Bernadettes (Gay Chefs) in the kitchen: Bernard: “Overseas they call them Rock Lobster, but here we still call them Cray.” Craig (Bernadette): holding a pair of cooked Crays up to his ears: “They actually make *fabulous* earrings.”

*NARRATOR V/O* over a bright graphic map of Australia narrowing to the coast of Western Australia. A fast wave of pin point lights switch on in quick succession (with accompanying light switch sounds) right up the coast, until all the Cray towns are lit up: “*Before dawn on the fifteenth of November, all up and down the coast, West Australia’s fisher-folk are racing out to sea to catch their first Lobsters of the season. They’ve just had a four and a half month break, many of the six hundred-strong fleet have been refitted, their Pots were set last night, and their enthusiasm’s running high. They’ll work seven days a week now, until the last Lobsters are hauled up on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June.*”

Aerial: In the pastel light of dawn, the fleet of Cray boats motor out of the Two Rocks marina, closing on ANDY ANDROSS at the helm of *Indian Warrior* and PUMPER PARKIN racing along nearby, on *Isla Joy*. SFX: Boat rumble under a *BREAKFAST SHOW RADIO ANNOUNCER V/O*: “. . . And they’ve turned on the weather for our Cray Fishermen this morning! It’s 5.05 and we’re in for another perfect Perth day. Our expected maximum, a sunny 28 degrees.” *PUMPER PARKIN V/O*: “We’re all out here before it gets light, keen as kids on Christmas Day.”

Super Text over *Isla Joy* motoring along: ***Beginning of the Season. Fishing for “Whites”.*** “Ready to rip,” PUMPER adds, with a chuckle at his Decky as he eases *Isla Joy*’s throttle back at the first of his Pots. His round floats bob on the surface of the water. Pumper’s Decky grapples the first of the floats with a hook, and pulls it up between the tipper. Water spins off the rope as it winds around the winch head, and coils into a box.

PUMPER leaves the boat running, and squints at ANDY’s first “stick” Pot surfacing not far away. As it appears, PUMPER tells us that he always starts the season with the round Stick Pots because the “whites” prefer them in the shallow waters. He explains that white Crays aren’t pure white, just a bit lighter than reds because they’ve just shed their shells. Moulting makes them hungry, so the fishermen usually catch plenty while they’re in-shore, then they have to chase them, when the Crays go red and rack off out into the deeper water.

On *Indian Warrior*, Andy Andross's stick Pot hits the tilted tipper with a bang. There is a bit of spidery movement inside, and the wet crunch of 2 Crays bunched together in the Pot. The Decky pulls out the first Cray and drops it into the steel "cacka box" bin. It's tail curls and slaps, with a clatter and a clank. A couple of legs fall off. Antennae creak in alarm. Andy's Decky measures the second Cray with a hand-held gauge. It's undersized. He throws it back.

*NARRATOR V/O* as we follow the 'white' CRAYFISH down, down, kicking its tail swimming backwards in an escape reflex, until it comes to rest on the ocean floor. It remains stunned for a moment, then scampers under the nearest ledge to join some of its many 'friends' as Andy's diesel engine fires again. *"Before they moult, the Crays stop eating, drink sea water, swell up, and force their old shells off. Then they huddle together, waiting for their new shells to harden. They're very hungry, but most feel too vulnerable to venture out while they're soft."*

SFX: over aging professional Diver, MAX CRAMER, pulling on diving gear at the beach: ABC Regional Radio's Paul Thompson says he's chatting with Fisheries Midwest Regional Manager, Randall Owens. Can Randall tell the listeners just what it costs to go Cray Fishing? *RANDALL OWENS V/O: "You can get an amateur license for \$25, which entitles you to catch 8 legal sized Crays a day during the season, caught either by hand or in a limit of 2 Cray Pots, which'll cost about \$120 each."*

As MAX CRAMER frog-walks his underwater scooter into the ocean off Geraldton (4 hrs drive north of Perth) he proudly informs us that he bought the scooter the day he was diagnosed with a heart condition. We follow Max underwater as he nears the opening of a Cray cave in the coral. *MAX CRAMER V/O: "In the early part of the whites, we have the advantage on the Commercial Fishermen. The Crays don't eat much while their shells are soft. Too afraid of being eaten."* Max dismounts his underwater scooter, and swims into the cave, which looks more like a tomb of Cray shells. The moults are so life-like that Max shakes a couple just to be sure. Deeper into the cave, he spots a crowd of live ones huddled on a ledge, and pokes his long lure behind them. They startle, and the closest Cray leaps toward him, comically. *"They think it's an Octopus."* The terrified Cray jumps right into Max's catch bag, just to be where it is dark and safe. *"I've had them jump down my vest."* Max snatches another Cray. *"It's like they've been caught in their underwear. We come hunting every day at the start of the season, until we fill up the deep freeze."*

Cool vaporous air escapes from the back of a refrigerated truck, as it is opened by Vinci Seafood Truck Driver, JASON WARD. Jason points out that the Crays are fed a delectable selection of Salmon head bait from Queensland, Snapper from China, and North Sea Herring from Holland as he removes a trolley, closes the truck, and strides off behind the trolley to collect the freshly-caught Crays from the Two Rocks marina. *NARRATOR V/O: "It costs the fisher-folk roughly two kilos of bait for every kilo of Lobster caught, but it's worth it. Lobsters attract between twenty and twenty-five dollars a kilo on the wharf."*

*Mare Nostrum* is waiting for Jason at the marina, and WARRYN BRAITHWAITE is clipping lids on a couple of bright plastic crates containing his live catch. JASON asks how they went. Warryn's not too happy. The Fisheries might be wrong. They've predicted a bumper season. Jason hefts the crates of Crays on to his trolley, and reminds Warryn that it's early days yet. He asks what Warryn got up to in the off season. A bit of modeling. Jason is amused.

Tumble-down Fishermens' shacks line the edge of lonely Desperate Bay (3 hrs drive north of Perth). SHAUN AKERSTROM his girlfriend, ELAINE, son, HARRY and Shaun's trusty Deck-hand - DIESEL the dog - are celebrating the end of their first day's Cray fishing with a few drinks. They sit under the patio on their vinyl chairs, watching the sun set over the sea. The scene is rudely interrupted by beefy MICK Akerstrom on his noisy derelict tractor, backing his boat away for the night. Shaun's Mum, CHRIS, arrives with some alcoholic

punch, and the family is complete. Chris and Mick reminisce about building their shack 36 years ago, and what an adventure *that* was!

They were there before the road went through, long before anyone else. After the shack, they built the jetty. Chris sighs, "You could hear a car coming long before it arrived." They can't believe that it's all going to be "pushed in and cleared up" next month. Bloody Government! As the sun sets, Shaun says he heard a rumour the other night, at darts, that they aren't going to rip the place down until April now.

In his modest Fremantle home, Truck Driver, JASON WARD settles on the lounge chair to watch the News. A man's V/O blubbers, "I'm never going to see them again," in obvious distress (7 Network News footage 21/1/98). Jason frowns, and pulls open a beer.

*Reporter DEAN COGLAN V/O: "Hours after the pre-dawn robbery, 57 year old Kevin Riddle was still badly shaken from his ordeal." KEVIN RIDDLE a TRUCK DRIVER, cries helplessly on the side of the road. "They surprised me," he struggles to say, before he breaks down again. An open empty CRAY TRUCK takes centre screen.*

JASON puts down his beer.

Cut to DEAN COGLAN on television: "Hauling eleven hundred kilograms of live Crays from Mt Gambia to Melbourne, he was flagged down by a motorist flashing his headlights on the Glenelg Highway, outside Ballarat." Cut to a slightly more composed KEVIN RIDDLE: "Chap sung out. 'You've got something dragging mate,' so I ducked under the truck." Kevin does it again for the camera. "When I come up, he had a bag over his head and another bloke came here in front." *DEAN COGLAN V/O: as the truck drives up the track. "Kevin was locked in the back of his truck after a terrifying ride up this lonely bush track, where the Crays were transferred to a separate vehicle. Police and the owners of the company are convinced the robbery was carried out by someone with connections to the industry. It's just not that simple disposing of more than a ton of live Crays."*

Close on the shocked Company BOSS: "They could be on a plane, Hong Kong, anywhere." KEVIN wipes his eyes with the back of his hand. "I can honestly say, if there are any poor buggers on the side of the road, I'm never gonna stop. Never again." DEAN COGLAN reappears: "Dean Coglán, Seven *Nightly* News."

Cut to JASON WARD's stunned, "Poor bastard" reaction.

Afternoon Aerial of Fremantle ending on Cray Trucks approaching the Cray Processing Factories at the harbour's edge. SFX: CB Radio Truckie Cray Yarns (building). Inside the Vinci Seafood truck cabin, JASON WARD chats on the CB. From his P.O.V. though the windscreen, we locate the harbour and Processors' area (site of the Fremantle Blessing of the Fleet) past the fish and chip shops, to arrive at the Vinci Seafoods office and factory.

JASON backs the truck to the factory door, and starts unloading the Crays, talking to them as he goes. Close up of FEELERS sticking out of bright plastic cartons, and reverse to take in the CRAY's bouncy P.O.V. through the crate as Jason walk-talks them into the factory. He says nutty things to the Crays like, "I have some good news and some bad news." Close on the CRAY's EYES swiveling in their sockets. "The good news? Free flight to Japan, all expenses paid. The bad news?" The Crays flip their tails and frantically try to escape as soon as the Factory Hand removes the lid. One makes it to the floor, but is quickly scooped up and sorted. Jason jovially hands the paper work to NICK CORBO, the Vinci Seafoods Manager.

From a balcony above the factory floor, the old Italian Fisherman and Boss of the factory, PHIL VINCI, and his wife, FRANCESCA, proudly oversee the operations. The floor is completely covered with Crays in tanks, and tubes, humming with the noise of generators pumping the seawater through. Francesca tells us, "I think I'm gonna buy him an aqua lung

because-a he spend all his life diving into those tanks.” Phil chuckles as he leads her inside the upstairs office reception. They draw our attention to the black and white photo on the wall, featuring small Cray boats fishing in Fremantle harbour, 50 years ago.

Phil points out the wooden boat he fished on as a Decky when he was young, pulling all the Pots by hand. Francesca thinks it’s good that they’ve made it more easy, to save the Fishermens’ backs. Phil relates how someone adapted a car differential to make the first winch. It changed their lives. In those days Crays sold for 6 pence a dozen, but they were glad of it. Now? He spreads his hands. Big business. Too big for one man. He’s lucky to have the family to help him manage it. As Phil leads Francesca out, past the offices of his sons and sons-in-law, all with harbour views, he confides that he’s happy that they all had their days on the boats. It strengthens their connection to the fleet.

Outside their Desperate Bay shack, SHAUN and MICK AKERSTROM sit, legs apart in their baggy shorts and matching singlets, baiting Cray Pots with half-rotten fish heads, with Diesel the dog keeping them company. They talk, while they work, about Mick’s Scandinavian Grandfather, John, lost overboard when the *Flora Dora* went down, one stormy night back in the 1920’s. “Lucky they salvaged the esky,” Mick says, rubbing his nose at the battered wooden icebox full of fly-blown fish heads. “I want young Harry to have that one day.”

In the 1.5 Million dollar Lobster Australia factory, on Fremantle’s Rous Head groin, Greek owner, THEO KAILIS, and factory manager, JOHN MINUTILLO, are showing one of their Chinese buyers around the operations. There are enormous rooms with temperature controlled seawater flowing through the endless below-ground Cray pens. On the factory floor, young Italian and Greek men sort the freshly-caught Crays by size and colour. *NARRATOR V/O: “While they wait for their flight, and the right price, the export quality Lobsters are purged of food, ‘pampered’ with aerated water, and prodded by their keepers to ensure that none are cannibalised before it’s time to fly. Once all the food is purged from their stomachs, the water is chilled down to make them sleepy, and easy to pack close together for the flight.”* The CHINESE BUYER stops to admire the jumbo-sized Lobsters. He pulls an enormous kicking Jumbo out of the nearest pen. The Chinese buyer is very interested in these because the Chinese eat them banquet-style, especially during the approaching Chinese New Year season. Theo graciously assures him that he will have ample.

SFX: Fade up Celebratory Chinese music. In the enormous tanks lining the up-market *Shun Fung* Chinese restaurant on the Swan River, a nervous Jumbo Cray is startled, and scooped out with a net. As we follow its tail kicking, dripping progress to the kitchen, we take in the revelry and activity at the tables. It is Chinese New Year, and the place is packed and festooned with red ‘good luck’ decorations. A magnificently presented Jumbo Crayfish passes the live one on its way out. It becomes a banquet for a hungry Chinese family of 16, who pause in the exchange of bright red gifts and chatter to admire it. FRANK ANG, the proud restaurateur explains that Chinese people eat a lot of Crayfish during Chinese New Year, because it symbolises something lively, like a dragon, and they like the red colour. Chinese people believe that eating it will bring them good luck. In the kitchen, the scooped up Jumbo has already become Sushi, presented in a highly decorative ice boat. As it emerges, Frank Ang explains that Australian Chinese people have also developed a taste for Japanese-style sushi Lobster, but in Japan they only eat the small single serve Lobsters. They think the curved tail symbolises an old man, and wisdom. Frank says he has more than 10 ways to serve 1 Jumbo Lobster. First they make a soup from the head, then the claws cooked with aromatic Chilli ...

“Or with *champagne*,” says outrageous gay Chef, BERNARD KING to his Chef’s assistants, the BERNADETTES, on a TV cooking show featuring Crayfish. Bernard is wearing a pink gingham waist-coat over his whites, and his two camp assistants, CRAIG BONNEY and IAN BURN are wearing matching pink gingham overalls with hot pink feather arm bands. As

they cook poached Cray tails with pickled pink peppercorns, they inform us that they are preparing this dish because they simply can't get their minds off Crayfish. They're off to the Abrolhos Islands soon, where the Fishermen catch an *enormous* amount of Crays, to visit an old friend who's opened a restaurant there. "Now switch it off, and leave the lid on 'til it cools," Bernard instructs. Close on Bernard's hand as he lowers the lid.

RABBI FRAELICH's hand smacks open the Torah. Religious zeal gleams in eyes, as he sternly surveys the (Perth) synagogue congregation in his traditional black robes and hat. The majestic wall of stained glass behind him glows with divine authority. From the raised pulpit he announces, "It is the law, written here in Leviticus, chapter nine: 'Animals that crawl on land or sea are *despicable* creatures'. Only things with fins and scales may we eat. This holy diet has been given to us by the Almighty!" Rabbi Fraelich slaps the Torah shut.

SFX: An irate woman is on the phone, appalled at the way Crayfish are piled up in Chinese restaurant tanks, and the dirty water they're kept in is a *disgrace*. We enter Senior RSPCA Inspector, MARTYN BEAUMONT's office behind his Jack Russell dog as Martyn informs the woman that the water can get dirty when there's a new arrival, but most tanks soon filter it out. As long as the levels of bacteria are correct, the animals are quite comfortable.

*MARTYN BEAUMONT V/O* cont'd over layers of Crays in reefs, like jungle cities, teeming with life. "Don't worry about them being crowded. That's how they survive out on the reefs, on top of each other. Doesn't worry them at all."

In a 3am Montage, beginning back in Theo Kailis' Lobster Australia factory, the pace is frantic. *THEO KAILIS V/O*: "25 years ago, we wrapped the Crays in wet newspaper, put them in a box, and on a plane to Paris, hoping they'd live, and the little Cafes would pay us for them. Now?" Cray after live Cray is being tightly packed between wood shavings in polystyrene cartons. Ice blocks are added, cartons are sealed, stickers are slapped on, trucks are waiting, and planes are taking off. Aerial of the road to the airport. More Cray trucks race to meet their flights. Off Fremantle, the fleet of Cray boats jostle at anchor. Whoosh, we go beneath them into the depths to see what the nocturnal Crays are up to.

Super Text over lines of migrating white Crays underwater, moving fast in their leggy half-swimming, half-running fashion over the sandy ocean floor. SFX: Troops marching. **Early in the Season. "Whites" on the Run.** *NARRATOR V/O*: "In early December, the sexually mature 'white' Crays leave the nursery caves and head out to sea. So great is their need to migrate that they risk exposure to predators as they rush over the sand for reasons known only to them. . . . Some have been known to walk right off the edge of the Continental Shelf – in the Lobster's answer to Lemming's Leap. The Fishermen don't know why they go. They're flat out just trying to guess the direction so they can drop their Pots in their path, hoping to strike it rich when the famished troops drop in for a feed."

PUMPER is up early, working by the light of the full Moon, swapping his stick Pots for Batten Pots on the *Isla Joy*. He tells us he's changing over because the whites are on the move, and what's left of them are too scared to crawl into the Pots on the sandy bottom. He'll be heading after them shortly, setting his Batten Pots in the deeper water, but it won't make much difference while the Moon is full. "Too much light in the water," Pumper says, eyeing the Moon's round reflection on the water. "Most'll be too scared to stop. Too scared the Ockies will get 'em."

Underwater, we watch one Crayfish hiding in the corner of a Pot, resting on the sandy bottom. It is hiding from an approaching Octopus. *NARRATOR V/O*: "Lobster is always at the top of the dreaded Octopus' menu." SFX: Insidious horror music. The Octopus spots the Cray in the Moon-lit water, and slithers into the Pot. SFX: The music comes to a crescendo as the Octopus envelopes the hapless Cray in a mass of tentacles. *PUMPER V/O*: "The Octopus gets in the Pot, gets a death grip on it, and injects it with this enzyme that turns all the Cray's meat to mush. It dies a horrible slow death, then the Ocky sucks the lot

*out, like a milkshake through a straw.”*

In Geraldton’s ABC Regional Radio Studios, Fisheries Midwest Regional Manager, RANDALL OWENS, takes a sip from a drink with a straw, and continues on mic’. “The Western Rock Lobster fishery brings millions of dollars every year into West Australia because it’s well managed.” PAUL THOMPSON smiles, and asks if today’s young Cray Fishermen are as anti-authoritarian as their fathers. “The rip-off mentality is going, but there’s still 5 to 10 percent who try and beat the system,” RANDALL admits.

SFX: A.B.C. News music. The News Reader announces: “*A Kardinya man forfeited his boat and was fined more than \$4000 today, after he was snared in a black market Crayfish ring. Murray John Bridger, a 34 year old mechanic, pleaded guilty in a Fremantle Magistrate’s Court to selling 28 Crayfish he caught off Rottneest Island without a commercial fishing license.*” Cut to Fisheries Department Special Investigations Officer, John Breeden, smugly standing on a Fisheries Patrol boat, with the ‘haul’. Breeden: “We’ve found Crays stuffed in milk crates, shopping trolleys, battery cases, false bottom scuba tanks, fire extinguishers. One woman had a heap of them down her pantyhose and pretended to be pregnant.” Cut back to an amused News Reader. “First offenders face fines of up to \$5000 with a mandatory penalty based on the haul, amounting to \$300 a kilogram, or \$150 a Cray.”

Back on RANDALL OWENS: “*Fishing for the Future* is our slogan, and the fishing communities are taking it on-board. We offer them *managed* sustainability, informed by our marine research.”

Fisheries Marine Scientists, ERIC BARKER and CHRIS CHUBB, are working in the shallow waters off Warnbro Sound (an hour’s drive south of Perth) on a large dinghy with *Fisheries Research* written on the side. Eric explains, “Every full Moon, we count the larval Lobsters settling in the shallow Limestone reefs along the coast of Western Australia. This gives us the data we need to predict the size of the catch 3 and 4 years ahead.” ERIC and CHRIS lift a Puerulus collector out of its triangular frame. Their synthetic seaweed is made of a white material, like wet cotton wool. Together they shake one of the panels over a grate. Close on the transparent Puerulus and tiny Juvenile Crays as they are sorted in the palm of Eric’s hand, counted, logged, and gently tipped back into the sea. ERIC tells us that the tiny Puerulus represents only a small part of the Lobster’s long life cycle. By the time they make it back to the shallow water, they have already been on an amazing 3000 kilometre Indian Ocean round trip, and are roughly 1 year old. It will be another three years before they are sexually mature.

SFX: Romantic music as we cut to a mature male Cray courting and eventually mating with a mature female Cray in a miraculous, stroking, leggy, ritual. NARRATOR V/O: “*Mating, between Crayfish is a delicate and private affair. Because of the need for their well-protected underbellies to meet, so that the male can transfer his sperm to the female’s curled underbelly, trust must be well and truly established on both sides. This can take days. The Cray courtship dance is a genteel, gradual, leggy affair, all stroking and caressing – an underwater odyssey of synchronised swimming, performed by millions, witnessed by very few human beings.*” As mating pair’s underbellies meet, we glide to the surface on a romantic note, leaving them to it.

A dog O/S barks as a Shaun Akerstrom’s hand flips over the tar-spotted female. Shaun V/O curses, and throws her back. NARRATOR V/O as we follow the tar-spotted female underwater: “*The Fisheries prohibit the Fisher-folk from keeping the fertilised females.*”

Underwater, a female Cray is grooming her eggs. NARRATOR V/O: “*A large female can produce a million eggs. She constantly tends them using her special grooming claw, keeping them protectively curled under her tail, with good reason. ‘Crayfish caviar’ is considered a delicacy amongst predators.*” The female fends off a fish, using her antennae like a prong.

In the Walkaway Pub (just south of Geraldton) RICHARD EARL “Dicky” CARR tells us that he likes nothing better than a mouth full of eggs, right off a berried female. Poor man’s caviar.

His FISHERMEN CRONIES tell us that Dicky is a tight-fisted millionaire! Dicky reminisces about how he got his first break at 14 by salvaging *Wild Rose*, a wooden Cray boat that had been smashed up on a reef - how he rebuilt her from the hull up, and nicked off fishing before he was allowed to leave school. Dicky thinks Crays are beautiful, “full of mystery, like women. Beautiful bodies and shit in the head.” Greed is Dicky’s bug bear. “You can pay a man to be dishonest, but you can never pay him to be honest.” He complains that the industry is full of greed and rules, and million dollar techno-boats fishing the life out of it. Breaks his heart, the massive corruption, and the moguls that built their empires off the little ‘cackas’. RUSSELL COOPER reminds Dicky that he had his fair share.

RUSSELL COOPER V/O describes the re-enactment (over a jaunty old-time melody) as DICKY CARR fast ‘skulls’ (rows standing with one long skulling oar) his wooden dinghy off Fishermens’ Wharf in Geraldton, with SAM BOWLES, a red-faced little FISHERIES INSPECTOR, behind him in his two-oared dinghy, rowing like fury to catch him. Dicky stops, chucks a few ‘cackas’ out, gets up, and skulls again. On the wharf, Dicky’s Cronies cheer. The Inspector is rapidly closing on him. Dicky gets up and skulls again, pulls away, stops, and throws the last of the cackas over the side. A big crowd of Spectators has gathered on the wharf now - all cheering and falling about laughing. Close on Dicky as he surrenders, with no evidence left in the boat. The furious Inspector throws down his oars.

The old-time music fades, as the Cronies fade out, and Geraldton’s modern Fishermens’ Wharf comes into focus. Processing factories take the place of the cronies. On the water, the huge Cray boat glides in, where Dicky once rowed his skulling dinghy. NARRATOR V/O: *“Today, the industry generates a massive three hundred million dollars a year for Western Australia, and it’s virtually impossible for any new commercial fisher-folk to break in. They must pay top dollar to take over an existing license, if they can get one. Not many want to sell once the lure of the Lobster is in their blood.”*

Super Text over a Cray boat moving fast through the water. ***Middle of the Season. Fishing for “Reds”.*** NARRATOR V/O: *“The six hundred strong fishing fleet are hot on the heels of the red Lobsters now, pulling their Pots daily. Humans are the by far the Lobster’s greatest predators, yet, due to Government regulations limiting the size of the fleet, the areas and amount of months they can fish, this ancient and resilient creature seems in endless supply. It’s the reason some of the remotest parts of the West Australian coast-line have been settled.”*

Sun rise at Desperate Bay, and MICK AKERTROM is riding his spluttering tractor down to the water with his boat in tow. CHRIS AKERSTROM watches him go in her nighty with a morning cup of tea. Chris recounts the shock of settling down in Desperate Bay as a young city bride. She sits on the bed, looking out at her men at sea, and fondly recalls how she and Mick got married on the strength of a good Cray catch.

SHAUN AKERSTROM flips over a wan-looking undersized Cray and shows us its worn-down legs. NARRATOR V/O: *“By the time the young migrating Lobsters reach the breeding grounds, they are weak, hungry, and desperate to find shelter. They barely have the strength to compete for space in the rocky crevices.”* SHAUN speculates that migration might be mass suicide, as he chucks the Cray back, along with some old bait. Beneath the surface a school of sharks circle and grab the bait. NARRATOR V/O: *“Sharks endlessly circle the fleet, trailing in a cloud of bait blood. They pass up the tired Lobster, but there’s no special immunity from the Bald Chin Groper.”* The tired Lobster tries to use its antennae to keep the Groper at bay, but it’s a losing battle. The Groper snaps a couple of legs off the Lobster with its sharp teeth, then returns and crunches it in two. The spoils are fought over by the school.

*NARRATOR V/O: "Predation is ever present in every stage of the Lobster's life cycle." The graphic pin-point light map of the coast of Western Australia appears, this time pin-pointing only Perth, Geraldton, and the Abrolhos Islands.*

*A band of orange light appears along the coast. NARRATOR V/O: "Four months after mating, all along the Continental Shelf, the Lobsters' eggs hatch." The orange light dissolves into a mass of translucent larvae. Close on the tiny larval Lobsters swimming, their antennae beating furiously, heading for the surface. NARRATOR V/O: "Like microscopic butterflies breaking out of their tiny cocoons, millions of larvae emerge. Gradually their legs straighten and their bodies flatten and become leaf-shaped." Montage of Phyllosoma swimming down by day and up by night: NARRATOR V/O: "Light sensitive, the Phyllosoma swim for the surface at night, and move below the surface by day. Meanwhile, the wind sweeps them along in ocean currents. So begins the Lobster's first year adrift on the high seas, where many fall prey to plankton-feeding predators. The remaining Phyllosoma somehow know that they must go with the flow, as their survival depends on becoming part of the planktonic soup until they grow big enough to be swept back to the in-shore breeding grounds."*

*Another map shows us a profile of the ocean floor and the ocean revealing the movement of the late-stage Phyllosoma as it is swept back by the currents. NARRATOR V/O: "Almost a year after setting off on their long surface voyage, the larval Lobsters are ready to return home. Much bigger now, having moulted fifteen or more times, they can sink lower into the ocean and catch the currents that will lead them back in-shore, where their life began." Flash-back to the minute Post-Puerelus Lobsters in Chris Chubb's palm. NARRATOR V/O: "On reaching the shallows, they moult again, changing from Phyllosoma into a tiny creature much more closely resembling a Lobster." Cut to one lonely miniature Lobster in a crack of reef. NARRATOR V/O: "At this in-between stage, they live quite solitary lives, spending their days hiding out in the rocky crevices. Cut to some juvenile Lobsters crawling over the head of a mature mother Lobster. NARRATOR V/O: "As they grow, and move to larger rocky holes, their socialising skills develop, until they mature into gregarious juveniles."*

*In the ABC Regional Radio Studio, Announcer, PAUL THOMPSON asks RANDALL OWENS how the Lobster survives when only one in a thousand makes it to maturity for the fishermen to catch? RANDALL: "The fishing fleet take a lot of Lobsters out of the water, and that means that there's more food and less competition for the breeding stock to get on with the task at hand. Billions of eggs hatch up and down the West Australian coastline each season, so there's always more than enough to keep the fisher-folk happy and the species in abundance for the future. As predicted, it's shaping up to be a bumper year." PAUL THOMPSON comments that this is good news for half of Geraldton's inhabitants, who are getting ready to set off for the Abrolhos Islands. He wishes them all a top season.*

*Super text over a 'Montage of Mothers': **The Abrolhos Season – A World Apart.** SFX: Fast 'frantic' music as the Mothers pack cartons, drag out life jackets, order kids around, bark supermarket orders into phones. Meanwhile, more Fisher-folk children are herded, and front doors are slammed.*

*On the wharf, fork-lifts heft bait, supermarkets deliver boxes of named groceries, and pregnant supply ships take the lot, with their trusty diesel motors spluttering. On Fishermens' Wharf, the non-fishing half of Geraldton have come to see the Abrolhos fleet off. Fishing veterans, DICKY CARR, and his Cronies, are amongst the land-lovers waving their good-byes as the fleet pulls out.*

*SAM SCARPUZZA's big Cray boat leads the fleet. He stands proudly on the flybridge with his son, and gives the on-lookers a big two-arms-in-the-air good-bye gesture before climbing down, and leaving his son to it.*

*JANE LIDDON and her son, SAM, are aboard the smallest jet boat in the fleet. JANE*

Skippers, legs apart, peering forward with total confidence. The back of her boat is fully loaded with Cray Pots and boxes of bait.

GRAHAME “Rager” RAYNOR Skippers the Rowland-owned Cray boat with ease. He stands at the flybridge above the deck, yelling friendly insults at Little Rat Chef, MITCH CLARKSON, and young Deckies JESSY and BEAU ROWLAND, who are drinking beer on deck, with a carton open between them.

Last out of port are the supply boats. They lumber along with their boat load of everything, including a kitchen sink. There are young families aboard. BEVIN SUCKLING, *The Southern Lady* Skipper, stands on the flybridge, steering the huge boat with a control switch no bigger than the tip of his finger.

From an Aerial, the visual impact of the Abrolhos Islands is astounding. The Southern Group of islands look precarious, tiny, perched barely above sea level, less robust than the asbestos shacks and water tanks perched squarely on top of them. All have wooden jetties jutting into the clear blue water, with sparkling Cray boats moored along-side. As the Supply boat stops at each tiny atoll to unload goods, there is a cacophony of noise, and rushes on the bait, as the Pots must be well-loaded for the first day’s onslaught. The atmosphere is charged with the excitement of deserted islands and treasure, minus the palm trees. The only vegetation is salt bush and mangroves. The jetty waters are teeming with fish, some up to 10 kilos, which are protected. *NARRATOR V/O: “Over the next three and a half months, a ‘lucky’ bunch of fisher-folk are permitted to hunt for Lobster from the windswept coral atolls which make up the hundred and twenty-two Abrolhos Islands. The licensed few make this pilgrimage sixty kilometres into the middle of the Indian ocean uprooting their families, gladly swapping their mainland homes for rough and ready tin shacks. Perched like Shags on rocks, barely above sea level, these primitive huts, with their noisy generators and rusty rainwater tanks make Gilligan’s Island look like a five star resort. There’s no palm trees, and definitely no shops.”*

At the Southern Group, JANE LIDDON collects her supplies in her jet boat, she explains that the supply boats are a vital link with the mainland. They bring fuel, bait, and supplies to the Abrolhos Islands, and take back live Crays. It’s a 4 hour one way trip, weather permitting, supplemented by the Abrolhos helicopters, which island hop several times a day. TI, Bevin Suckling’s son and Supply boat Deckie, has nothing but admiration for Jane. He tells us, “Jane has bigger balls than most of the Fishermen,” as he throws a coin over the side, as a peace offering to the Cray Gods. TRACEY BASILLE is also superstitious. She confides that she always adds a rose to her husband Andrew’s lunch box on his first day out at the Abrolhos, which he must throw overboard before dropping the first Pot, on pain of death.

At the Easter Group, MITCH CLARKSON proudly re-hangs his *Le Rat Café* sign outside the kitchen of the only restaurant on the Abrolhos. It takes up a corner of a community hall, which doubles as the Little Rat Island pool hall and pub. Mitch tells us a bit of his unusual history as a Chef and a Deck hand, as he winds a Chef’s bandana around his head.

Intercut Southern and Easter Group characters as they set their Pots at sunset, in anticipation for tomorrow’s HUGE first day catch.

JANE LIDDON surfs in on a surge that lands her jet boat right on top of a reef. SAM drops a Pot, and Jane surfs them out gain in centimetres of white-wash. *NARRATOR V/O: “Jane Liddon sets her Pots in the shallowest reefs in search of her Crays.”* Jane gives a whoop of first day exhilaration, and says the place is like a sea desert, always changing. Sam asks if she’ll ever buy them a big boat. “Nah,” Jane says. “Too boring, like driving a truck.”

*NARRATOR V/O* over SAM SCARPUZZA making himself and VIC BASILLE a cup of espresso coffee in his wind-blown hut on Basille Island: “*Sam Scarpuzza’s hut is treated like a coffee house in the town square by the café elders of Basille Island, who gather there to*

*gossip and relive old times when the weather's rough.*" SAM and VIC lament some changes, and are glad of others. They don't miss the kerosene lights and primitive facilities, but in those days, if your Cray Pot wasn't half-full, you'd move it.

Now, you leave it there if 2 or 3 Crays crawl in. Occasionally, they slip in an Italian word, like a "piatella" of coral (and translate) "Crayfish hotel". They came to the Abrolhos after accepting 1 of 2 choices: "Fish or go to War." Vic blames 'tricks of the trade' for bugging up the industry. "The price of Crayfish is a lot," Sam says. "Bigger boats, bigger debts. More they get, more they want." Vic laments that nobody catches their own bait any more. "Nothing stays the same," Sam tsks, as Vic rises to leave. Vic steps outside, shining his torch along the concrete path with their family names and dates forever etched into it. "More than half a century ago we came here," Sam says, as Vic's torch highlights 'Scarpuzza Mob 1949'. Vic nods, and impulsively cuts across the coral which chinks underfoot like broken porcelain. *NARRATOR V/O: "Each culture has added something of its own uniqueness to the Islands."* At the door of the tiny Church, he stops, shines his torch in at the Madonna, nods with satisfaction, and moves on.

After a few drinks at the Easter Group Community Hall, RAGER, JIMMY YOUNGER, REG KELLY, and MITCH stagger back to Rager's camp for more drinks. The surface of Little Rat is hard to navigate, drunk or sober. At night, it looks more like the surface of the Moon, than a quaint coral atoll. Half-way across, the generators go off. The men curse in the dark. *SFX: A ticking clock, and suspense music, over wet munching sounds (building): Underwater, time-lapse photography affords us a peek at a horde of opening day Crays attacking orange Salmon head bait in a Cray Pot. NARRATOR V/O: "Because they are scavengers, Crays have been called the 'cockroaches of the sea'."* Close on two Crays in the wild, fighting over a Mussel. *"In the wild, they eat Mussels, Molluscs, and the dead remains of each other when the opportunity arises."*

At Theo Kailis' Rous Head facilities in Fremantle, we pass the 3am shift (fast packing an airline shipment) to join JOHN MINUTILLO, who is doing the rounds of the pens. JOHN finds a Cray being cannibalised, snatches it up, and throws the remains into a bin marked "tails". He tells us that the pens must be patrolled, regularly.

*SFX: The wet ticking volume increases, as we enter JANE LIDDON's bedroom and her alarm goes off: 4.45am. JANE fumbles for a candle, bumbles out, and lights the gas stove. Outside, the wind rips through the islands, shaking windows, stretching wires, but many Cray Crews are already working - as are the toilets perched on the edge of the coral, over the water. Jane emerges from a toilet framed by two Whale bones with a heart carved in the door.*

The Rowland DECKIES are amused to see RAGER leading hung-over MITCH up the jetty in his slept-in clothes. They motor into the sunrise with Mitch cursing Rager all the way.

On the reef, Jane's son, SAM pulls Pots over luxuriant Staghorn and Plate corals of every colour: They pass clouds of pink and violet as the coral spawns, releasing its magnificent colours into the water, briefly amplifying the size of the coral. As JANE explains why she avoids taking photos, we gradually move underwater to witness the coral spawning. Jane *V/O* explains that she prefers to *remember* the colours, so that her paintings echo the emotion.

RAGER arrives at their first Pot, and the Crew find themselves working in the breakers. The Crew work in mountainous water, which can send them ricocheting all over the deck. As the deck heaves, Mitch calls Rager a "Breaker Cowboy". The Pot is half full – a celebration – and Rager gets them out of there. When they hit calmer water, MITCH turns a Cray over, and tickles its underside. Gradually, the Cray's legs relax. Mitch climbs on the engine mounting, crosses his legs, places the Cray on his head, and begins to chant, in a loud Cherokee Indian wail. The Crew chant with him, until the next Pot comes up empty, and

they fall about laughing. Rager says Mitch is full of shit, as he guns the boat back into the breakers. Mitch clings to the engine mounting, and yells blue murder as the boat mounts the wave. The Deckies jump. The boat smacks down the back of the wave, and the Deckies shriek with adrenaline because they're still up in mid-air, as high as the wheelhouse. Then they come crashing down, arms pin-wheeling, screaming with laughter, as they hit the deck.

At Desperate Bay, the AKERSTROMS' eyes widen as they watch an ABC TV News Report. On screen, ANDREW COWAN excitedly describes how he caught a GIANT CRAY off the Hale Road reef at suburban Scarborough. Cut to the 5.4 kilo Tropical Cray exploring Underwater World's touch pool. Its markings are spectacular – bright blues and oranges - with distinct bands of colour around the legs. *PETER HOLLAND V/O:* as the Giant Cray tries unsuccessfully to hide under the artificial reef. "*Andrew raced the 1 metre Crayfish to Underwater World in an esky.*" Curator, STEVE MENZIES announces that "Aussie" is the largest Cray in captivity - 10 to 15 years old, rarely seen this far south. He might have been washed down by recent storms. Andrew admits that he deliberated about handing the Cray over, "but he just wasn't safe out there. Someone might have eaten him." As *PETER HOLLAND V/O* informs us that we can visit "Aussie" at the touch pool of Underwater World, MICK AKERSTROM gets up, unplugs the telly, and wraps the cord around it. The shack is littered with packed cardboard boxes. Mick tells us that they're going to leave first thing in the morning, before the bulldozers arrive. He doesn't want to see the place ripped down. SHAUN and ELAINE are dejected. At their feet, HARRY is curled up with Diesel dog. CHRIS purposefully tells us that she and Mick have decided to shout Shaun, Elaine, and Harry a trip "over East", to see another giant Crayfish.

Before dawn, *The Southern Lady's* engines gurgle to life, as BEVIN SUCKLING prepares to collect her load of first day Crays from the Southern Group of islands. *NARRATOR V/O:* SAM SCARPUZZA overseeing his sons, working by jetty lights and boat lights to retrieve their wooden holding crates of Crays from their storage place under the Basille Island jetties. Their hair is a mess, and their faces are still absent with sleep, as they work mechanically to load the Crays into plastic crates destined for the Processing factory. "*The lure of the Lobster is in their blood. Most left school at fourteen to follow their fathers on to Cray boats. It's the only life they've known, and most take pride in that. Some travel in the off-season, indulging other passions with the big bucks they earn, but when the season opens, nothing can keep them away. They ask themselves, What good is a million bucks if it keeps you from fishing?*" In Cray boats, the Fishermen race their Crays over the moon-lit water to the side of *The Southern Lady*, where TI helps to load them. *NARRATOR V/O:* "*There's something about the untamed beauty of the Abrolhos Islands that keeps them grounded, happy to return to the family hut with its noisy generator, and its rusty rainwater tank. . .*"

As *The Southern Lady* moves off, Basille Island looks fragile, from the height of the flybridge, with its coral honed by the prevailing winds into a leading edge. The expanse of silvery moon-lit ocean between supply boat and island widens as the engines pick up speed - and grind down. JANE LIDDON's jet boat comes alongside - a baby to the mother boat. On *The Southern Lady's* deck, saltwater showers bathe the crates of live Crays. Jane's lined face is welcome as she loads her Crays and empty petrol drums to be refilled on the mainland.

SFX: TV channel change static becomes the roar of bulldozers. In harsh daylight, the Akerstroms' shack is demolished. Cut to Geraldton suburbia: MICK and CHRIS AKERSTROM struggle to put on a brave face as they wish SHAUN, ELAINE, and HARRY a good trip "over east". The kids back out of the concrete driveway, in their packed Utility.

SFX: The Utility's engine becomes the growl of diesel boat engines, churning up Geraldton harbour as *The Southern Lady* arrives at the Geraldton wharf with its load of Abrolhos Crays. We follow crates on a mini conveyor belt, into the back of a Geraldton Coop Truck.

Inside the Geraldton Coop, loud tour leader, ROMA HARDY, leads a handful of paper shower-capped PENSIONERS, some Japanese TOURISTS, and BERNARD KING and the

BERNADETTES around the processing plant. She yells over the factory noise, that these Crays unloading have come from the Abrolhos Islands. Behind her, the atmosphere is like a wet abattoir. “You think they’d kill them first,” one of the shocked pensioners mutters to her husband as she eyes an enormous crate of Crays being lowered into boiling water.

MARTYN BEAUMONT pats the resident RSPCA dog, and says the most important thing is knowing how to kill Crayfish. Boiling them alive is inhumane. The recommended way is to leave them in some icy water for 10 minutes, which renders them unconscious. When their antennae stop moving, we know they can be safely boiled without feeling any pain.

*NARRATOR V/O* over factory floor WORKERS wearing overalls, caps, and thick rubber gloves, prod and shake the Crays to see if they’re still awake. Some are boiled, others are broken in two. “*The Lobsters are sorted, and those in less than prime condition don’t get to go on their overseas holiday. If they’ve lost too many legs or an antennae on the way, they’re treated to a very cold bath – to numb them for the Pot.*” ROMA demonstrates how the Crays are quite floppy after being in the icy water. Behind her, a huge cage of chilled Crays is hydraulically lowered into an enormous vat of boiling water. One of the shower-capped BERNADETTES elbows the other, and points at the feelers still moving above the white hot, boiling water as Roma leads them to another quieter tank room, where they keep a tank of odd-ball and rare Crays alive for the tourists. The Bernards’ adore the prehistoric-looking Slipper Cray, and other collected freaks of nature - the Cray with a horn growing out of its eye, and the albino. One of the Bernadettes holds a pair of freak Crays to his chest to make a bra, and does a sexy ultra feminine wiggle, much to the distaste of the male pensioners.

At their daughter’s house in Fremantle, PHIL and FRANCESCA VINCI proudly tell us that Fremantle’s next Blessing of the Fleet will be a big one for them. We discover that the Blessing is a religious ceremony that originated from their home village, Capo d’Orlando, in Sicily. Every year, all the Vinci family attends. FRANCESCA admires the pearled bodice on the half-made white dress her 8 year old granddaughter, JOHANNA, will wear in the ‘procession of virgins’ behind the Madonna. Francesca proudly shows us a photo of herself, as a Sicilian girl, taking part in a procession honoring *Our Lady of Capo d’Orlando*.

In his grungy Perth ‘boutique’ outrageous Costume Designer, ROBERT McCAFFREY, is painstakingly putting together his own range of costumes for the Blessing of the Fleet. He has called it the “Mr Neptune and the Sea Nymphs Range”, with good reason. He shows us the gold “hairy lurex” fabric that Mr Neptune’s magnificent 10 foot tail will be ‘sculpted’ out of. Robert has visions of Mr Neptune accompanied by a pair of ‘pet’ Crays on a leash. He demonstrates with his own pair of plastic Crays, “Vonda and Garth”, but assures us that on the big day, he’ll deck out the model with the real thing. Robert raves about his designs for a ‘cheeky’ array of short shorts, filigreed bra tops, and mini fins for the male and female ‘nymphs’, all with the ‘fish scale’ facet which Robert is currently slaving over. Then there’s the jewellery. Robert proudly models Mr Neptune’s crown, made of twisted gold, pearls, and Emu feathers - the *only* combination for an *Australian* sea God.

Back on Little Rat Island, over afternoon coffee at *Le Rat Café*, BERNARD and the BERNADETTES ask MITCH how he prepares his Crayfish? “I try to keep all their legs on,” Mitch replies, “when I cook them on the mainland. Here, I never get asked for it.” BERNARD is surprised. He looks at the BERNADETTES, and they all burst out laughing.

BERNARD and the BERNADETTES are not the only ones laughing as they jump feet first off Rager’s boat in their hot pink snorkels and flippers.

At JIMMY YOUNGER’s BBQ, the Bernards’ serve Crays and more Crays in every conceivable fashion, which none of the Fishermen will touch. They prefer the king-sized steaks or a BBQ sausage any day. The BERNADETTES stuff themselves with Crays, drink too much, and fall through Jimmy’s rickety CRAY POT FURNITURE. JIMMY isn’t

concerned. He's caught up in relating his worst Cray experience - dashing with death amongst the waves. REG KELLY wanders off, back to his own camp. Rager reckons Reg is a strange one. He's the only Fisherman who doesn't think the Abrolhos season is too short.

In a mirror Montage of their preparation for arrival, we see the MOTHERS packing everything up in cardboard boxes, gathering their kids, and REG KELLY sitting outside playing his tortured violin. "God that was awful," Reg mutters to himself, as he joins the Fisher-folk carting their flammable rubbish high in the middle of each island, as the traditional last night bonfires are lit.

SFX: Sad boozy V/O farewells. A night Aerial of the ABROLHOS ISLANDS. Each tiny island has a big bonfire lit, which glow like tiny volcanoes out in the middle of the ocean.

Super Text over the pastel light of dawn, as the fleet of Cray boats and supply boats leave the islands until next year: **30<sup>th</sup> of June. End of the West Australian Cray Season.**

In her Fremantle studio, JANE LIDDON puts the finishing touches on her 'coral spawning' painting. SFX: *RICHARD COURT, Premier of W.A. (if available) is introduced on Jane's radio. "The Blessing of the Fleet is a reminder of the significance of the Lobster fishing industry in Western Australia. Over the years, our Italian and Portuguese communities have generously shared their rich and varied traditions which have become an essential part of this City's culture, livelihood, and lifestyle. Please join us on the streets of Fremantle this 18<sup>th</sup> of October to wish them an abundant fishing season, and a safe and profitable year ahead."* Jane shrug-nods 'maybe I will' as she dabs the finishing touches on her painting.

At the Kailis fish markets, ROBERT McCAFFREY confides that he has completed the costumes, and discovered the *perfect* Mr Neptune for the Blessing of the Fleet, but he still needs a pair of cooked Crays for Mr Neptune's leash pets. He labours over the purchase 2 'special' Crays, and finally makes a successful bid.

On Princess Highway (300 odd kilometres south of Adelaide) SHAUN, ELAINE and HARRY AKERSTROM whoop with delight as they catch their first glimpse of LARRY the GIANT LOBSTER monument. SFX: On the utility's radio, they hear, on 'local' talk-back radio, county woman, *KATH PELTZ V/O*, yarning about Larry's origins. *"The original owners, a Chemist and a Fisherman, decided to have a little Lobster statue built to put on the roof of the Café, just about the time when the old system changed to metric. When Larry arrived on 2 semi-trailers, they nearly DIED. They ordered him built 17 feet high, and here he was, 17 metres instead, but they never looked back. All the tourists reckon Larry's more life-like than the big pineapple and the big banana put together!"* Shaun and Elaine gape and laugh as they get out at the foot of LARRY. Little Harry hides his face from 4 tonne Larry Lobster towering over them (15.3 metres from mouth to tail and a leg span of 13.5 metres).

PUMPER PARKIN and ANDY ANDROSS chat about what they'll do now the season is over, as they make and repair their Cray Pots. PUMPER has maintenance to do on his boat, then he'll probably go fishing for fish, but Andy won't. He's heading for the nearest rock and roll band so he can go snake pit dancing.

SFX: Brass bands 'tuning up' discordantly. Preparations are underway in Fremantle for the Blessing of the Fleet. St. Patrick's Basilica is drowned in flowers. Cray Boats are scrubbed, and the flags of many nations are fixed to ropes.

Glorious sunshine blesses the ALTAR BOYS as they emerge from St. Patrick's Basilica in the heart of Fremantle on the morning of the Blessing. They are followed by black suited MEN holding the ITALIAN FLAG and the AUSTRALIAN FLAG, side by side. A BRASS BAND emerges, playing religious songs, followed by banner-bearing groups, then the QUEEN of the Blessing of the Fleet in a white dress, sash and crown. JOHANNA emerges with other little girls in white carrying the tiny Madonna statue belonging to Capo d'Orlando,

followed by other children in national dress, and a flock of white first communion children. FRANCESCA VINCI dabs a tear from her eye as she watches JOHANNA pass. PHIL VINCI juts his chin with pride.

SAM SCARPUZZA and VIC BASILLE watch the MADONNA - *Our Lady Of Martyrs* – emerge, along with the MAYOR of Fremantle, other dignitaries, and brass bands.

The Procession walks through the crowded streets of Fremantle, and arrives at the fishing boat harbour, where Cray Boats festooned with flags from all over the world wait, engines running. One boat stands out - the Vinci boat, *Mare Nostrum* with WARRYN BRAITHWAITE dressed as Mr Neptune, in his 10 foot gold hairy lurex tail, crown, with 2 Crayfish on a leash. He is surrounded by sexy male and female Sea nymphs. ROBERT McCAFFREY is exuberant. Nearby, JANE LIDDON, MITCH and RAGER are amused. Rager gives Mitch a beer. Kailis manager, JOHN MINUTILLO, gives them the evil eye.

At the fishing boat harbour, the Archbishop of Perth - the most Reverend B.J. HICKEY D.D. - steps on to a festooned Cray boat, along with the big *Our lady of Martyrs* Statue, and Dignitaries. A second Cray boat takes Capo d'Orlando's little Madonna, and all the procession children, followed by an entourage of 12 Cray boats, which are packed with other members of the procession.

JASON WARD enjoys his vantage point, with a carton of beer, from the top of the Vinci Seafoods Truck parked at the harbour-side factory. He raises a can at WARRYN, who waves VONDA and GARTH, his leash Crays, back at Jason.

The ARCHBISHOP blesses the fleet with great aplomb (broadcast for all to hear) and flicks holy water in every direction. A mighty cheer goes up from religious, and non religious spectators all around.

ROBERT McCAFFREY pops champagne. JANE smiles. MITCH and RAGER beer toast the fleet. "Cray-ziest industry in the world," Mitch quips. "Here we go again!" Jane yells as the fireworks go off.

Super Text over the Cray boats of revelers making their merry way out of the harbour: *Another Season of LOBSTER TALES Begins . . .*