

Night. MUSIC. We drive fast down a DESERT HIGHWAY. Broken yellow lines on the asphalt. Gnarled branches of yucca trees gliding past. Mountains, ghost-like, rise in the distance.

KOLCHAK (V.O.)
As children, we look into the
darkness and fear it.

A POLICE SCANNER crackles on the dashboard. Behind the wheel sits CARL KOLCHAK. A Blow-Pop in his mouth. His eyes scan the landscape, searching for something.

KOLCHAK (V.O.)
Some primal instinct warning us
danger lies in the ink of night.

A man of intense purpose, but zero pretense, Kolchak always takes his own path -- and pays dearly for it. His V.O. continues, the WORDS SUPERING ONTO THE SCREEN, as if typed.

KOLCHAK (V.O.)
Adults learn to dismiss that fear.

The words take us to a COMPUTER. We're in a small, cluttered HOUSE. Books, papers, CDs. Kolchak is at his desk, typing.

KOLCHAK (V.O.)
Reason dictating what children
really fear is simply the unknown.

From outside, we see Kolchak's little house perched on a ridge, the towers of downtown L.A. rising in the distance.

KOLCHAK (V.O.)
But there's more to the world than
reason alone can explain.

KOLCHAK DRIVING AGAIN. Headlights cut a narrow trail through the darkness, toward the scattered lights of a SMALL TOWN.

KOLCHAK (V.O.)
And our fear of the dark never
really goes away...

Kolchak's car WHIPS PAST, revealing a new HOUSING COMMUNITY. Plastic flags and a "Homes Open" banner flap in a soft wind.

EXT. GALE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

WIND CHIMES, hung from the eaves, tinkle forlornly. Through the windows, we see EMILY GALE, mid 30s, moving through the sparsely furnished house in a fuzzy pink bathrobe.

KOLCHAK (V.O.)
 We just learn to pretend it's not
 there.

Emily picks up a lunch box, snapping it closed as she crosses to the front door, where her husband, HENRY, late 30s, is buttoning a Pendleton over his night watchman's uniform.

HENRY GALE
 Cold tonight.

EMILY
 Don't forget this.

She hands him the lunch box. Henry smiles flirtatiously.

HENRY GALE
 I could call in sick, you know.

EMILY
 Oh yeah? And how we gonna make the
 house payments?

HENRY GALE
 You worry too much.

EMILY
 You don't worry enough.

Henry kisses his wife, loving her very much.

HENRY GALE
 You go to bed now.

EMILY
 In a minute.

She watches him go to his PICKUP TRUCK, then closes the door.

Henry slides in the cab, when he hears *something move*. He looks outside. He definitely heard something, but nothing's there. After a beat, he keys the ignition, dismissing it.

INT. GALE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Emily's in the kitchen, putting plates away, when -- *crrr, crrr*. It sounds like *scratching*, cutting through the clatter of the dishes. Then IT STOPS, as if aware she's listening.

EMILY
 Henry?

She goes to the living room window, but the truck's gone. Only Emily's HONDA COMPACT is parked in the drive. She wonders at this, when... *crrr, crrr*.

Emily turns her head slowly, toward the door. Something's there, scratching against the wood. TRYING TO GET INSIDE.

Heart throbbing, Emily walks softly to the kitchen, picking up the phone, when -- *crrr, crrr, CRASH! THE FRONT DOOR SLAMS OPEN, WOOD SPLINTERING.*

To hell with the phone -- Emily slides a LONG BLADE from the knife block. Gripping it tight, she gently eases open the door to the living room, to see what's there:

They're DARK SHAPES, moving low to the ground, with animal grace. Their eyes catch the light, GLOWING.

What the hell are they? Emily stares, too scared to move, when ONE OF THE CREATURES TURNS TO HER. Its eyes are hooded and fleshy, staring at her with cold intelligence. Then --

THE CREATURE LUNGES AT HER. In an instant, Emily turns and runs, racing out the kitchen, knife in hand, into:

INT. GALE RESIDENCE - GARAGE - NIGHT

Slamming and locking the door behind her. But the creatures are right behind her, SCRATCHING AND YOWLING FEROCIOUSLY.

Emily presses her body against the wood. She's trapped -- and scared shitless. Her eyes go to CAR KEYS, hanging on a hook. We see a plan forming in her mind.

She swallows, screwing up her courage, then kicks off her slippers and RUNS FOR IT. GRABBING THE CAR KEYS and HOISTING OPEN THE GARAGE DOOR as --

THE CREATURES BREAK THROUGH THE DOOR. But Emily's already out of the garage and at the Honda, jamming the key in the lock, when -- *WHUMPF!* She's yanked brutally out of frame.

Emily SCREAMS -- the gut-wrenching, terrified scream of someone who knows she's about to die. She's dragged along the ground, NAILS SCRAPING THE ASPHALT.

But there's nothing to grab, and no one to hear her cries.

In seconds, she's swallowed up by the darkness of the desert, leaving only the distant tinkling of the wind chimes on the empty house, as we FADE TO BLACK.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. GALE RESIDENCE - DAY

Now a crime scene, with the attendant circus of law enforcement PERSONNEL, VEHICLES and EQUIPMENT.

KOLCHAK (V.O.)

When a crime occurs, a team of experts descends.

As Kolchak speaks, we FIND and HOLD on the people he describes, doing their work. A series of VIDEO SNAPSHOTS.

KOLCHAK (V.O.)

Paramedics to collect the body, if any. *Coroners* to dissect it. *Forensic experts* to search for physical evidence. *Uniformed officers* to take statements. And *detectives* to deliver a theory of the crime to the District Attorney.

Behind police tape, we see a dozen REPORTERS AND CAMERAMEN. This ain't O.J. No one's doing much of anything right now, except setting up equipment and waiting for a statement.

KOLCHAK (V.O.)

Then there are those of us in the media. Who show up only when we deem a crime "newsworthy." We perform a public service -- that is to say, we titillate the public with whatever lurid facts, gossip or innuendo we can gather.

A SEDAN pulls to a stop behind the reporters. A female reporter, PERRI REED, late 20s, steps out with photographer JAIN McMANUS, early 20s, bespectacled, quietly intense.

KOLCHAK (V.O.)

But that is not to say reporters are utterly lacking in value. We do ask questions. Sometimes... we ask the questions no one else will.

Reed and McManus cross to a DEPUTY manning the police tape.

REED

Perri Reed, with the Beacon.

The Deputy eyes her with more than professional interest. Reed's used to this kind of attention, and bears it with grace.

DEPUTY

Press passes.

McManus trades a look with Reed. Their passes are slung around their necks, but they hold them up anyway.

DEPUTY

Only problem, Ms. Reed. A reporter from your paper's already here.

Off Reed and McManus, their surprise:

INT. GALE RESIDENCE - GARAGE - DAY

Carl Kolchak rises into frame. He's deep in thought, staring at the garage floor, then walking from the kitchen to the garage door, as if trying to retrace Emily's last steps.

REED (O.S.)

You're from the Beacon?

Kolchak looks up to see Reed and McManus standing at the kitchen door. Then returns to what he was doing.

KOLCHAK

Carl Kolchak.

REED

I'm Perri Reed, this is Jain McManus. We're from the Beacon.

Kolchak looks up at them briefly. Then:

KOLCHAK

You can go.

REED

Excuse me?

KOLCHAK

Obviously it's a mix-up, but I've got the assignment. You can go.

MCMANUS

Do you even work at the Beacon, Mr. Horshack?

KOLCHAK

Kolchak. Today's my first day.

Kolchak flashes a smile. It's a great one, too. Carl can turn on the charm when he wants to. But Reed is immune.

REED

The mix-up's yours, Mr. Kolchak.
This is my story.

KOLCHAK

Look, I've already got the story --
and not the one they're peddling to
those clowns outside, either.
(holding up his camera)
I even took the pictures.

REED

And what is the story?

Kolchak regards Reed. To get rid of them, he's going to have to indulge her.

KOLCHAK

Emily Gale, aged 32, reported
missing by husband Henry, 37, when
he returned home this morning from
his job as night watchman at the
Perkey furniture warehouse in
Palmdale. Signs of violence lead
police to suspect foul play.

REED

That's it?

KOLCHAK

No, that's not it. I've got
confidential sources, Ms. Reed.

MCMANUS

First day on the job, and you've
got confidential sources?

REED

What do those sources tell you?

KOLCHAK

That even though no body's been
found, the cops consider this a
murder case, and husband Henry the
prime suspect. They believe Emily
was attacked with a garden claw,
which made the deep scratches
behind you and on the front door.
They even have a nice juicy motive
they don't intend to divulge.

REED

Which is?

Kolchak smiles again, playful.

KOLCHAK

Wouldn't you like to know?

Reed stares at him, irked by his pleasant obstinacy.

REED

Yes, I would. And I intend to.

Reed turns to go, McManus following. Off Kolchak:

INT. BEACON NEWSROOM - VINCENZO'S OFFICE - DAY

Tense silence. City Editor TONY VINCENZO, 40s, stares ahead, jaw set. Opposite him sit Reed and Kolchak, an unrepentant twinkle in his eye. McManus stands behind them. Finally:

VINCENZO

No one actually gave you the assignment, did they, Carl?

KOLCHAK

You hired me to cover crime, did you not, Tony?

VINCENZO

Yes, but --

KOLCHAK

I was the first one on the scene --

REED

It's my beat. You can't just go grabbing assignments --

VINCENZO

Perri, please.

(to Kolchak)

Most people come into the office, meet their colleagues, get a desk, before they start snagging stories.

KOLCHAK

Just doing my job, Tony.

VINCENZO

And I appreciate your enterprise, Carl. But Perri's the senior crime reporter at this paper --

KOLCHAK
She's the senior crime reporter?

REED
(offended)
I've been here four years --

VINCENZO
(overriding)
The two of you are expected to work
together, is that clear?

Reed likes the sound of this even less than Kolchak. But:

KOLCHAK REED
Crystal. Yes.

VINCENZO
Good. The story's hers.

INT. BEACON NEWSROOM - REED'S DESK - DAY

Reed, still annoyed, sets down her things, picking up the
phone and punching in a number. McManus passes.

MCMANUS
You want my pictures now?

REED
Please.

Through Reed's phone, we hear a filtered VOICE.

CRAY (O.S.)
Cray.

REED
Detective Cray, it's Perri Reed.

CRAY (O.S.)
Hey, Perri, what can I do for you?

Reed unfolds a pad, clicking her pen as she looks across the
newsroom, where she sees... Kolchak, settling into a desk.

REED
It's about that missing woman out
in the desert, Emily Gale.

CRAY (O.S.)
Oh yeah.

REED

I got some information I was hoping you'd confirm.

CRAY (O.S.)

Shoot.

REED

What I heard was that you guys are treating this as a murder case, and consider her husband your suspect.

CRAY (O.S.)

Where'd you hear that?

REED

Another reporter here. Carl Kolchak --

CRAY (O.S.)

Yeah, I've met Kolchak. He's a pain in the ass.

REED

He says you believe the murder weapon was a garden claw.

Silence on the other end of the line. Reed looks across the newsroom. This time, Kolchak catches her look. Glances back at her. She swivels in her chair so as not to face him.

REED

Detective?

CRAY (O.S.)

Look, I don't know where he got that information, but I can't confirm any of it.

REED

He says he has sources.

CRAY (O.S.)

B-S. None of my guys would source information like that. I can't give you anything beyond the official statement. OK?

Reed glances over at Kolchak, who smiles back at her. As if he knows she's hit a wall on the story.

REED

OK. Thanks anyway, Detective.

Reed hangs up, frustrated. She sits, thinking. Then:

ANGLE - KOLCHAK

Unpacks books from a cardboard box. They're old books, and there are a lot of them. He sees Reed approaching.

KOLCHAK

How's it coming?

REED

I want to know your sources.

KOLCHAK

I can't tell you that. But you can use my information if you want.

REED

I'm not using your information without knowing your sources.

KOLCHAK

Suit yourself. You do want to know the nice, juicy motive for the husband killing her, right?

Kolchak's right. Which only irks her all the more.

KOLCHAK

That is why you're here, isn't it?

REED

What is it?

KOLCHAK

She was pregnant.

Kolchak goes back to unpacking his books, leaving Reed to digest this information, as we go:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Vast, forbidding. We hear a distant buzzing, like ANGRY INSECTS. Whatever it is, the sound grows louder, until --

VROOOM! A DIRT BIKE crests a rise, then ANOTHER, and ANOTHER. Their 4-stroke engines revved by TEENAGE BOYS sporting bucket-style helmets.

The three boys zoom past, leaving a fourth RIDER to catch up. But as the last boy tops the hill, he LOSES CONTROL and CRASHES ass over teakettle into the hardscrabble earth.

The Rider, twisted in a dusty heap, looks up to see his friends way off in the distance, oblivious. Pissed, he turns painfully, taking off his helmet, only now seeing...

Something CLOSE IN FRAME. It's out of focus, but whatever it is, the boy's face goes from anger to fear and revulsion.

He looks like he's going to puke. Quickly, he rises to his feet, leaving his broken bike behind as he rushes to catch up to his friends. Only now do we reveal...

A CORPSE, flies buzzing and feeding on its flesh.

The face is BLOATED and DISCOLORED by the desert heat, rendering it nearly unrecognizable. But the BLOOD-SPLATTERED PINK ROBE leaves no doubt this is the body of Emily Gale.

EXT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY

A CRUSH OF REPORTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS, clustered around a hollow-eyed Henry Gale, led forward by DEPUTIES. The story, we gather, has grown more lurid and "newsworthy."

Despite the questions shouted at him, Gale remains silent, stone-faced, as he's taken inside. Among the crowd of media, we find Perri Reed, not enjoying this one bit.

Another Deputy moves through the crowd, distributing Xeroxed statements. McManus approaches, camera around his neck.

MCMANUS

What's it say?

REED

(reading the statement)

Gale is being questioned for the murder of his pregnant wife. Her fetus was torn from her body.

MCMANUS

(sickened)

Oh man...

REED

Police are looking for the murder weapon --

MCMANUS

A garden claw?

REED

Precisely.

MCMANUS
How'd Kolchak know?

Reed shakes her head, wondering the same thing.

REED
Now everybody does.

EXT. COUNTY MORGUE - NIGHT

A grim, concrete structure on the edge of the desert. Only a few cars are parked outside.

THROUGH THE WINDOWS, we see a CORONER lead a middle-aged couple, ED and TRISH MEDLOCK, and their daughter, JULIE, 8, out of the lobby, into the restricted section of the morgue.

INT. COUNTY MORGUE - NIGHT

Ed, whom we will come to realize was Emily's brother, is grieving at having to identify his sister's body, but tries to muster fatherly composure for his daughter's sake.

ED MEDLOCK
Honey, the doctor needs to see
Mommy and me alone for a minute.
Will you be OK waiting here?

Julie looks to her mother, then nods. She's scared to be left alone in this place, but wants to be brave.

She watches as Ed and Trish follow the Coroner through swinging doors, through which she gets a BRIEF GLIMPSE of her aunt's sheet-draped CORPSE, lying on a table.

KOLCHAK (O.S.)
A little scary, isn't it?

The girl looks over, surprised to see Kolchak sitting on a bench. We don't know how he got in, or how long he's been here. Julie looks down. He speaks gently, understandingly.

KOLCHAK
The bodies of dead people used to
scare me, too.

The girl says nothing, but we can see from her eyes she's interested. Listening.

KOLCHAK
Until I realized the people who
lived in those bodies weren't there
anymore.

(MORE)

KOLCHAK (cont'd)
They'd gone someplace else. You
can tell that, can't you?

The girl nods slowly. Then:

JULIE
I'm still afraid.

KOLCHAK
Of what?

She looks toward the windows.

JULIE
Of what's out there.

Kolchak wonders at this, when the door opens, Ed and Trish
Medlock surprised to see Kolchak talking to their daughter.

ED MEDLOCK
Who are you?

KOLCHAK
My name's Carl Kolchak, Mr.
Medlock. I'm a reporter.

Disgusted, Ed collects his daughter, preparing to leave.

ED MEDLOCK
How the hell'd you get in here?

KOLCHAK
I'm writing about your sister's
death. The police think your
brother-in-law killed her.

ED MEDLOCK
Of course he did. How dare you
come in here?!

Medlock hustles Julie out of the room, but Kolchak reads a
different emotion on his wife's face.

KOLCHAK
Mrs. Medlock.

She lingers, turning to face him.

KOLCHAK
Do you believe Henry Gale murdered
his wife?

Her face tells us she doesn't, or at least doesn't want to. But she only stares at Kolchak for a moment, then leaves without answering. Off Kolchak:

INT. BEACON NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Darkened, the lights of the freeway and city below twinkling outside the windows. Most of the reporters have filed their stories already and gone home, but not...

Reed, who sits at her desk, staring unhappily at her monitor. She's writing her story, but clearly not liking what she has. She looks up, seeing Kolchak approach her desk.

REED

You come here to gloat?

KOLCHAK

I come in peace.

Kolchak holds up his hands in surrender. Reed sighs.

REED

I should've listened to you. You had the story. Now I have to write the same thing as everybody else.

KOLCHAK

Not necessarily.

Kolchak holds up some typed pages.

REED

What's that?

KOLCHAK

Emily Gale's brother and his wife.

REED

What? You talked to them?

(off his shrug)

You just can't let this story go, can you?

KOLCHAK

You want my notes or not?

REED

You know I do.

Kolchak hands them over. As Reed begins to read:

KOLCHAK

He thinks his brother-in-law's guilty, the wife doesn't. That's your lead.

REED

What, that the wife "gave you a look?" I don't think so.

KOLCHAK

She believes Henry Gale is innocent. Which means she believes the real killer or killers are still out there.

REED

I appreciate your help, Carl. I do. But this man thinks Henry Gale murdered his sister. That's tomorrow's headline.

KOLCHAK

I don't think so --

Kolchak stares at her, sensing it's an argument he can't win.

KOLCHAK

-- but it's your story.

After a beat, he turns to leave. Reed looks after him, surprised at how easily he surrendered.

REED

Carl... why can't you let this story go?

Kolchak just smiles back at her, and keeps going. Off Reed, wondering about him, then getting to work:

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

A cinderblock motor court a few miles off the interstate. We see the BLUE FLICKER of a TV in the darkened window of one of the ground-floor rooms.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT - CLOSE ON A TV

The old "George of the Jungle" cartoon is on, familiar theme playing. Julie lies on a bed, in pajamas, watching it. Her father wipes past the screen, heading to the bathroom.

ED MEDLOCK

You need anything besides aspirin?

LIGHT spills into the room through the open BATHROOM DOOR, where Trish is in a bathrobe, about to step into the shower.

TRISH

That's it.

ED MEDLOCK

(to Julie)

Be right back, petunia.

Julie nods at her father as he goes, the door clicking shut behind him. As she turns her attention back to the TV:

IN THE BATHROOM, water comes on in the shower. Trish slips off her bathrobe, pulling the shower curtain open.

Julie watches the TV, when -- *crrr, crrr*. Her eyes go to the door -- something is scratching against it.

Julie looks to the bathroom, where her mother is, but the DOOR STARTS RATTLING LOUD, THE SCRATCHING HARD AGAINST IT. Then, before she gets the chance to run --

BANG! THE DOOR BURSTS OPEN. We see the shadows of TWO CREATURES entering the room. But, to our surprise, Julie is no longer on the bed. In fact, she's nowhere to be seen.

All we see is the TV LIGHT FLICKERING across the dark room and the WEDGE OF LIGHT spilling from the bathroom, where Trish still showers, unaware of the danger outside.

CLOSE ON JULIE, whom we now realize has HIDDEN UNDER THE BED. She watches, too scared to breathe, as the dark shapes of the creatures move past, heading to the bathroom.

IN THE SHOWER, Trish lets the water run through her hair when -- suddenly -- the LIGHTS GO OUT. Alarmed:

TRISH

Julie?

WHAM! The creatures LUNGE AT HER, flying through the curtain, Trish SLAMMING HARD against the shower wall. Trish, completely unprepared, screams and tries to fight back.

ANGLE ON JULIE, hearing her mother's cries, she crawls back under the bed as far as she can, scrunching against the wall, wishing she could block out the terrible sounds.

The girl's heart is thumping hard, eyes wide with terror. Keeping as still and quiet as she possibly can when, even more terrifying, the ROOM FALLS SILENT --

In the bathroom, Trish NO LONGER MOVES. She's slumped against the edge of the tub floor. The creatures' razor-sharp claws pad through the BLOOD AND WATER on the tile.

Julie's eyes are fixed on the bathroom door, where she still can't see the creatures, only their leather-skinned legs. They move into the room quietly, with frightening calm. Julie watching to be sure they keep right on going, when --

One of the creatures STOPS.

Now the other creature stops, too. Julie's eyes look frantically from side to side, trying to figure out what's going on. Knowing she has no place else to hide or run to.

GRRRRR! A CREATURE LUNGES UNDER THE BED, GROWLING and SNAPPING ITS LONG, BLOODY TEETH close in Julia's face. As the BED IS UP-ENDED, throwing us into DARKNESS:

CUT TO BLACK

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

MUSIC. As in the Teaser, it ties together FRAGMENTS OF TIME, scenes out of chronological order, but connected by emotion:

KOLCHAK DRIVES THROUGH THE NIGHT, face lit by the instrument panel. Sad purpose sending him back into the desert...

POLICE LIGHTS STROBE OUTSIDE THE MOTEL ROOM. Kolchak watches as PARAMEDICS wheel a battered Trish Medlock, still alive, toward an ambulance, a badly shaken Ed at her side...

A NEWS CONFERENCE jammed with reporters, photographers and cameramen. Ed, red-eyed, stands before them.

ED MEDLOCK

I just returned from the hospital.
My wife, Trish, is in the ICU
there, fighting for her life...

The reporters dutifully record every word. Kolchak stands in back, but doesn't take notes, just listens intently...

KOLCHAK STILL DRIVING. The night outside his window...

A CAMERA FLASH, lens lowered to reveal McManus, photographing the motel room DOOR. Deep CLAW MARKS in the splintered wood.

McManus steps away, making eye contact with Kolchak. The SOUND of a roomful of cameras CLICKING returning us to...

THE NEWS CONFERENCE .

ED MEDLOCK

I'm just... I'm here because I want
to appeal to whoever took our
daughter. Julie. To beg them.

Medlock's voice breaks. He holds up her SCHOOL PICTURE, struggling to maintain his composure.

ED MEDLOCK

Please... please bring her back to
us. We won't ask questions. We
just want our little girl... home.

Ed steps aside, a cacophony of QUESTIONS rising. Off Kolchak, silent, his interest beyond journalism....

KOLCHAK'S CAR BLOWS PAST, heading toward the skyscrapers of downtown L.A., glowing with light in the pre-dawn sky. The MUSIC RINGS OUT, bringing us to:

INT. BEACON NEWSROOM - DAY

Kolchak enters, crossing the busy newsroom to his desk.

REED (O.S.)

Carl.

Reed motions to Kolchak, a phone cradled on her shoulder. He heads toward her, Reed hanging up as he arrives.

REED

How'd the news conference go?

KOLCHAK

Lot of questions, no answers. The theory being they're now looking for a serial killer of some kind.

REED

What about your sources? What do they say?

Kolchak shakes his head "no."

KOLCHAK

Thanks for letting me lend a hand.

REED

Yeah, well... my lead last night should've been about the killer. That's twice I've argued with you and been wrong.

KOLCHAK

It was a tough call.

Reed nods, but she's studying Kolchak. Wondering how he knew, once again, to make the right call. In any event, we sense her antagonism has softened.

REED

That was Henry Gale's attorney on the phone just now.

KOLCHAK

What did he want?

REED

An interview. Now that the charges against his client have been dropped, he wants the publicity. To help clear his name.

KOLCHAK
That should be a good interview.

Reed nods.

REED
Want to come?

INT. KOLCHAK'S CAR - DRIVING - DAY

Kolchak's behind the wheel. Reed shifts uncomfortably in her seat. Finding she's sitting on some CD jewel cases. She sets them on the dash amid a dozen more CDs scattered there.

An old GUMBY FIGURE hangs from the rear-view mirror, the lower half of its body TORN AWAY.

REED
Gumby do something to piss you off?

Kolchak smiles.

KOLCHAK
It's not mine.

The scanner on the dashboard SQUAWKS with a police call. Kolchak lowers the volume.

REED
Monitoring police calls is against the law, you know.

KOLCHAK
(mock surprise)
Is it?

Off Reed, watching Kolchak:

EXT. GALE RESIDENCE - DAY

Kolchak's Trans Am pulls to a stop out front, where McManus is waiting at his CAR, reading a dog-eared copy of Dante's "Divine Comedy." Seeing Kolchak and Reed approach:

HENRY GALE (O.S.)
I don't know why anybody'd do this.

INT. GALE RESIDENCE - DAY

Gale sits in a wooden chair, staring at the floor. Trying to make sense of the nightmare his life's become.

HENRY GALE

I don't know why this is happening.

Reed leans forward, empathetic, listening; but it's Kolchak's silence, letting Reed ask all the questions, that's striking.

REED

Do you believe someone's targeted your wife and her brother's family?

HENRY GALE

Nobody even knows who we are. We just moved here. Ed's family's not from around here, either.

REED

Until last night, you know your brother-in-law accepted the police theory that you killed his sister.

Henry Gale looks down again. This is awkward, painful.

HENRY GALE

I can't say I understand why Ed would think that, but I guess, when there are no answers, people get desperate for an explanation. Sometimes, they start to believe the unbelievable.

Reed looks to Kolchak. To see if he has any questions.

KOLCHAK

You were the last one to see your wife alive, Mr. Gale.

HENRY GALE

That's right.

KOLCHAK

Did you hear or see anything outside the house before you left?

HENRY GALE

I did hear something. Right before I got in my truck. But I think it was just an animal or something.

KOLCHAK

An animal?

HENRY GALE

Yeah. Is that important?

KOLCHAK

Did you see anything? Eyes that
would've caught the light? Tracks
in the dirt of any kind?

Henry stares at Kolchak, confused. As is Reed, who looks to
McManus. Wondering where Kolchak is going with this.

HENRY GALE

Tracks in the dirt? I don't
understand.

(off Kolchak's silence)

Are you saying an animal did this?

EXT. GALE RESIDENCE - DAY

Interview over, Kolchak walks toward his car, Reed and
McManus a few steps behind.

REED

What were you doing?

KOLCHAK

Asking questions.

REED

About animals. You think an animal
killed Emily Gale? Or took that
little girl?

Kolchak shrugs.

REED

Carl, what do animals have to do
with any of this?

KOLCHAK

Nothing, obviously.

He opens his car door, waiting for Reed to join him.

REED

I'll ride back with Jain.

Kolchak nods, getting in his car. As he drives off:

MCMANUS

What was that about?

Off Reed, wanting to know the same thing:

INT. BEACON NEWSROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON A COMPUTER MONITOR. "Kolchak, Carl" being Googled. We REVEAL Reed at her computer, glancing surreptitiously at Kolchak, working at his desk, across the newsroom.

ON THE SCREEN, thousands of entries appear. In QUICK CUTS, STORY after STORY APPEARS on the screen, all datelined Phoenix, Arizona, all bearing Kolchak's byline.

The HEADLINES are about corruption, crime, politics. Others aren't by Kolchak, but about him winning JOURNALISM AWARDS. But none suggests any connection to the recent events here.

Reed stares at the screen, dead-ended. We PRELAP ringing through a PHONE RECEIVER, then TIME CUT TO:

REED AT HER DESK

On the phone, pencil in hand. A voice, filtered:

DANIELS (O.S.)

Ted Daniels.

REED

Mr. Daniels, my name's Perri Reed, I'm a colleague of Carl Kolchak's at the L.A. Beacon. I understand he worked for you in Phoenix.

DANIELS (O.S.)

That's right. How's Kolchak doing?

REED

That's why I'm calling, sir. I know he stopped working there about a year ago. Can you tell me about that?

DANIELS (O.S.)

What is this, an investigation?

REED

Not exactly, sir, no -- I just --

DANIELS (O.S.)

You have any questions, you go talk to the FBI. I still consider Kolchak a friend --

REED

Did you say the FBI?

Daniels is silent. Perhaps realizing he's said too much.

REED

Why should I talk to the FBI? Mr. Daniels?

DANIELS (O.S.)

I have nothing more to say.

He hangs up, leaving Reed staring at the phone. Wondering what the FBI has to do with Kolchak leaving his job.

INT. BEACON NEWSROOM - PHOTO DEPARTMENT - DAY

A dozen tiny computer MEMORY STICKS tumble onto a desk top. We adjust to find McManus in the photo department's dark, oversized office in the corner of the newsroom.

The memory sticks are labeled and dated "Motel room," "Gale house," etc. He pops them into base stations, the DIGITAL IMAGES he's stored appearing on large FLAT-SCREEN MONITORS.

McManus pushes his glasses back on his nose, scrolling quickly through the images. Searching for something. Stopping when a PHOTO FROM THE MOTEL catches his eye.

Working quickly, McManus uses a mouse to enlarge and enhance the DESERT EARTH in the f.g. Where he sees what looks like ANIMAL TRACKS. He stares at the screen, disbelieving...

MCMANUS

(under his breath)
Sonofabitch...

INT. BEACON NEWSROOM - DAY

Reed waits on the line. "FBI, Phoenix Field Office, (602) 279-5511" is scribbled on her pad. From the receiver:

FAIN (O.S.)

Agent Fain.

REED

Agent Fain, my name is Perri Reed.
I'm with the L.A. Beacon.

FAIN (O.S.)

How can I help you, Perri Reed from
the L.A. Beacon?

Fain's voice sounds friendly enough, but there's a hard edge beneath it -- this is a man used to wielding authority.

REED
I'm calling about Carl Kolchak --

FAIN (O.S.)
Kolchak? You know where he is?

REED
He works with me. At the Beacon.

FAIN (O.S.)
Is that right? I'd been wondering
where he disappeared to.

REED
I know he used to write for the
paper there in Phoenix, sir, but
his editor wouldn't tell me why he
stopped.

FAIN (O.S.)
You gonna write a story about this,
Ms. Reed? 'Cause none of Kolchak's
buddies out here in Phoenix would.

REED
Is there a story?

FAIN (O.S.)
Hell, yes, there is, if you're
willing to write it. Carl Kolchak
is a murderer.
(off her stunned silence)
Or didn't you know that, Ms. Reed?

Reed looks at Kolchak, who catches her eye. Seeing him in a
disturbing new light.

ANGLE - KOLCHAK

Trying to read Reed's expression. McManus comes up behind.

MCMANUS
Got a minute?

Kolchak nods, rising to follow:

INT. BEACON NEWSROOM - PHOTO DEPARTMENT - DAY

CLOSE ON THE FLAT-SCREEN MONITORS, a series of enhanced
images of PAW PRINTS in the desert earth.

MCMANUS

I went through all the shots I took at the Gale house and the motel. I wasn't trying to photograph the dirt, so it was a little dodgy. But still...

Kolchak stares at the images.

KOLCHAK

Tracks.

MCMANUS

They're pretty much all partials, but look at this --

McManus changes the image on one of the monitors, showing Kolchak standing outside the motel last night.

KOLCHAK

Me?

MCMANUS

Not you. Behind you.

McManus uses the mouse to zoom in on the darkness beyond Kolchak. In the black desert, we make out... the vague outline of a creature, its EYES GLOWING.

Kolchak stares, chills running up his spine.

MCMANUS

What the hell is it, Kolchak?

Kolchak shrugs, poker-faced.

KOLCHAK

Probably a coyote, that's all.

MCMANUS

Uh-uh.

McManus grabs a FIELD GUIDE to California animals, flipping it open to a dog-eared page. He indicates the DRAWING there.

MCMANUS

I checked. Coyotes and wolves leave heart-shaped tracks, inner toes smaller than the outer ones.

McManus points to the tracks on the screen.

MCMANUS

These aren't heart-shaped. And they have five pads, not two. They aren't coyotes, they aren't wolves, they aren't anything in this book.

We sense none of this comes as a surprise to Kolchak.

MCMANUS

This used to be your story, Mr. Kolchak, but now it's ours. So what the hell are they?

Off Kolchak, his non-answer:

EXT. PHOENIX SKYLINE - DAY

Reed drives past in a rental car, the city of Phoenix rising on the horizon behind her.

EXT. ARIZONA STATE ROAD - DAY

Reed's rental car comes to a stop on a deserted stretch of desert highway.

Agent BERNARD FAIN waits for her by his own n.d. sedan, wearing sunglasses. He's a large, powerful man whose perfect grooming and posture suggest a military background.

FAIN

I appreciate your coming all this way, Ms. Reed.

REED

You said you had something to show me.

Fain indicates a nondescript road marker, "23."

FAIN

This is where it happened, 18 months ago.

REED

Carl Kolchak killed his wife?

FAIN

That he did. Of course that's not his story.

Fain steps out into the highway, pointing in a direction.

FAIN

He says he and his wife were coming
from that direction...

We PAN OVER to where Fain is pointing, DAY BECOMING NIGHT,
camera TAKING US BACK IN TIME, to that night 18 months ago.
A pair of HEADLIGHTS in the distance pricks the darkness.

INT. KOLCHAK'S CAR - DRIVING - NIGHT (18 MONTHS AGO)

Kolchak is behind the wheel. The GUMBY figurine dangles from
the rear-view mirror, undamaged. His pretty wife, IRENE,
early 30s, has the window open. She turns to Carl, smiling.

Kolchak returns his wife's smile, then looks back to the
road, seeing AN ANIMAL DART IN FRONT OF THE CAR. Kolchak
turns the wheel hard, swerving to miss it.

EXT. ARIZONA STATE ROAD - NIGHT (18 MONTHS AGO)

Kolchak's car spins around, lurching to a dusty stop on the
shoulder of the road.

INT. KOLCHAK'S CAR - NIGHT (18 MONTHS AGO)

Kolchak turns to his wife.

KOLCHAK

You OK?

IRENE

Did you hit it?

Kolchak looks back toward the highway. Nothing's there.

KOLCHAK

I don't think so.

IRENE

Carl...

Kolchak turns, seeing what Irene sees... out in the darkness,
GLOWING EYES. It's too dark to see the creatures themselves,
but there are a LOT OF THEM.

KOLCHAK

Roll up your window.

IRENE

What're you going to do?

In the rear-view mirror, we see the EYES behind the car, too.
They're SURROUNDED.

KOLCHAK

Get us out of here.

Kolchak jams the car in reverse, then shifts into drive, when -- WHAMWHAMWHAM!! The CREATURES HURL THEMSELVES AGAINST THE CAR WINDOWS, GLASS SPIDERING. Irene CRIES OUT, seeing:

The CREATURES SCREAM AND YOWL on the hood and sides of the car, incredibly loud and terrifyingly close.

And they are hideous: BLACK GUMS bare SHARP, NEEDLE-LIKE TEETH. LEATHERY, HAIRLESS SKIN. And POWERFUL, BLACK CLAWS, scraping furiously at the glass, PUNCHING THROUGH IT.

Kolchak presses on the gas to zoom out of there, when -- KABAM! A CREATURE CRASHES THROUGH THE GLASS, RIGHT AT KOLCHAK, plunging us into:

BLACKNESS. We hold there for a beat, then FADE UP ON:

Kolchak, slowly awakening to find... he's still in the driver's seat. MORNING LIGHT shines. We could almost think it's all been a bad dream, until --

The Gumby figure comes into focus. It's been slashed in half, and hangs torso-less from the rear-view mirror.

Kolchak sits up. He's bloodied, DEEP GASHES in his chest. He turns to the passenger's seat, but there's no sign of Irene. Just her open door.

KOLCHAK

Irene?

Kolchak stiffly pushes out his side of the car.

EXT. ARIZONA STATE ROAD - DAY (18 MONTHS AGO)

Kolchak steps out painfully, but sees no sign of his wife.

KOLCHAK

Irene?!

He goes around the car, to the shoulder of the road, slowing. The heartbreak in his eyes tells us he's found her before we see: Irene's LIFELESS BODY, BLOOD soaked into the dirt.

EXT. ARIZONA STATE ROAD - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

Reed stares at the ground where Kolchak's wife's body was.

REED

Not a very believable story.

FAIN

(Australian accent)

"A dingo took my baby?"

(smiles)

These monsters sure were convenient, killing his wife, but leaving him alive, don't you think?

REED

But he was never charged.

FAIN

Insufficient evidence. We couldn't find the murder weapon.

REED

(anticipating)

A garden claw?

Fain nods.

FAIN

Carl put on one helluva show. Kept insisting his paper write a story about these creatures roaming the desert. Which they wouldn't, of course. As much to protect their reputation as his.

REED

So what happened?

FAIN

Judge ordered Kolchak to undergo psychiatric evaluation. After six months, he finally recanted. He'd suffered some kind of "hysterical delusion," but couldn't remember what really happened, of course.

Reed's mind is working, realizing all the connections between what happened here and in the desert outside of L.A. The real reasons for Kolchak's passionate interest in the story.

FAIN

I'm just surprised Kolchak was able to land another job.

REED

Yeah.

FAIN

I've answered your questions, Ms. Reed, now it's your turn to answer mine. Why are you investigating Carl Kolchak?

Reed looks at Fain, reluctant to speak. Knowing just how damning her answer will be:

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Kolchak is hunched down, examining the earth at his feet.

KOLCHAK

I was standing here?

McManus stands above him, camera around his neck.

MCMANUS

Yeah. I took the picture from here. So whatever it was, it was out there.

McManus points at the desert beyond Kolchak. We CUT TO:

The desert earth, ANGLING UP to find Kolchak approaching, McManus a few steps behind.

KOLCHAK

No drag marks.

MCMANUS

Drag marks?

KOLCHAK

Emily Gale was dragged from her home. But there are no drag marks here.

MCMANUS

Which means what?

KOLCHAK

They carried her off...

(processing)

Instead of looking for her body, the police should be looking for that little girl. Alive.

MCMANUS

I don't understand. What kind of animal carries off a little girl?

KOLCHAK

Who said these things are animals?

McManus stares at Kolchak, more disturbed than ever --

MCMANUS

You're freaking me out.

-- when the approach of several VEHICLES draws their attention. The first one comes to a stop, Reed stepping out.

MCMANUS

Perri? What're you doing here?

Reed looks sheepish, but before she can answer, Fain appears behind her, accompanied by several SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES.

FAIN

If it isn't my old friend Carl.

Kolchak's been expecting him to show up sooner or later.

KOLCHAK

Agent Fain.

FAIN

I talked to the authorities here, Carl. It seems this case you're, uh, "investigating" has uncanny similarities to your wife's murder.

Kolchak looks to Reed. Her guilty look says it all. McManus is trying hard to make sense of what's happening.

MCMANUS

What?!

The Deputies handcuff Kolchak, leading him into a car.

FAIN

(to McManus)

Well, don't just stand there. Take some pictures.

Fain gets into a car with the Deputies, driving off. Leaving Reed and McManus looking after them.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Not a lot of people around at this hour. Reed waits on a bench outside the bullpen, turning to see Vincenzo enter. She rises to meet him.

VINCENZO

Where is he?

REED

They're still questioning him.

VINCENZO

I understand I have you to thank for this.

REED

You knew what happened in Phoenix and didn't say anything.

VINCENZO

It's no one's business --

REED

Hiring a murderer?

VINCENZO

Kolchak's no murderer.

REED

How can you be so sure?

They've reached an impasse. Vincenzo realizing he needs to take another tack.

VINCENZO

You know how long I've known Carl Kolchak? As long as I've been a reporter. We started out together at the Vegas Sun.

(beat)

Eighteen months ago, his life was as close to perfect as it could be. He was at the top of his career, could've had a job at any paper or TV station in the country. But he didn't want it.

REED

This is where I ask you why not.

VINCENZO

Because he'd fallen in love. For once in his life, the poor bastard was happy, truly happy. Then Irene gets murdered, right in front of his eyes, and he just... comes apart. Starts spouting crazy stories about werewolves. He spends six months in the psych ward, but by then the damage is done. No editor would even take his calls.

REED

No editor but you.

VINCENZO

Because I know him. And I know he'd never have killed Irene. Never.

Vincenzo's made a pretty convincing case. Still --

REED

He was in an institution, Tony. That doesn't worry you?

VINCENZO

Look, he's my friend, but this newspaper comes first. You see Kolchak acting or behaving strangely in any way, I expect you to tell me.

REED

You'd let him go?

VINCENZO

I can't afford to expose the Beacon to that kind of ridicule. Or him.

A DOOR opens, a somewhat ruffled Kolchak appearing. Despite the ordeal he's just been through, he manages a smile.

KOLCHAK

The prisoner emerges.

VINCENZO

They done with you?

KOLCHAK

For now. They have no evidence. Only their fevered imaginations.

Kolchak looks to Reed, who's feeling a little embarrassed:

EXT. KOLCHAK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Reed's sedan comes to a stop outside Kolchak's house.

KOLCHAK
Thanks for the lift.

REED
Carl...

She's thinking about how to put this.

REED
I didn't mean, when I started
asking questions --

KOLCHAK
You're a good reporter, Perri.

REED
-- I didn't mean to get you
arrested.

KOLCHAK
It's no problem. I'm used to it.

Reed has fallen silent, looking at Kolchak.

KOLCHAK
What?

But she's not staring at Kolchak, but past him.

REED
Is that your house?

KOLCHAK
Yes.

REED
Why is your front door open?

Off Kolchak, turning to see it's true:

EXT. KOLCHAK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

All is dark, quiet. Not even a dog barking in the distance.

Kolchak approaches, Reed just behind. Reaching the door, he stops to pat his pockets, looking for something to defend himself. Finding only... a PEN. He holds it up.

KOLCHAK
 (drily)
 Mightier than the sword.

Kolchak braces himself, then-- BAM!

INT. KOLCHAK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

THE DOOR'S KICKED OPEN, LIGHTS FLICKED ON to find: BOOKS and PAPERS scattered on the floor, drawers akimbo. No monsters here, just a SHAMBLES. Somebody's trashed the place.

Reed steps in behind Kolchak.

REED
 Oh my god.

KOLCHAK
 (pocketing his pen)
 Agent Fain, I presume.

REED
 Let me help you straighten up.

Kolchak looks for open floor to walk toward the kitchen.

KOLCHAK
 I need a beer. How about you?

REED
 Sure.

Kolchak goes into the kitchen, Reed looking around the room. Hardly knowing where to begin. Then she notices, among the papers scattered on the ground, a bunch of FILE FOLDERS.

Leaning down, she sees the headings: "Unexplained Attacks"... "Supernatural Claims"... "Sightings"...

IN THE KITCHEN, Kolchak opens the beers. Then starts opening cabinets. Looking for some clean glasses.

Reed furrows her brow. In QUICK CUTS, we see her reading Sub-Heads: HAUNTINGS. POLTERGEISTS. CREATURES - MYTHOLOGICAL. CREATURES - DEMONIC.

KOLCHAK (O.S.)
 Hope you don't mind a bottle.

REED
 That's fine.

A THICK SHEAF OF PAPERS spills from the folder. Reed picks them up, seeing...

WOLF TEXTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS. From Greek mythology and Biblical times, through the Middle Ages, to the 20th Century, showing wolves as HARBINGERS OF EVIL... at the GATES OF HELL... CARRYING OFF WOMEN IN THEIR MOUTHS.

The images are frightening, as is their volume. Suggesting the magnitude of Kolchak's obsession.

KOLCHAK (O.S.)

When is a wolf not a wolf?

Reed startles, surprised to see Kolchak standing above her with two beer bottles. She didn't hear him enter.

REED

You recanted your story, but you never stopped believing.

KOLCHAK

I got tired of bouncing off the rubber walls.

REED

You never had any confidential sources, did you?

(off his silence)

How did you know the details of Emily Gale's murder would match your wife's so perfectly?

KOLCHAK

Maybe it's like Agent Fain says. Maybe I know because I killed her.

REED

Or?

Kolchak puts down the beers.

KOLCHAK

I'd been tracking these creatures. I identified a dozen sightings, two in the area the week before she was killed.

REED

You thought they were coming for someone, but you didn't get help?

KOLCHAK

From who? My psychiatrist? I didn't know who they'd strike. Or why. I never would've guessed they'd take that little girl.

REED

Even if all that's true --
(indicates other files)
Hauntings, demons, poltergeists?

Kolchak picks up a portable phone, tossing it to Reed.

KOLCHAK

You can call Vincenzo. Let him know he can fire me now.

Reed indicates the files.

REED

Explain first.

KOLCHAK

Because you might believe me? Or to satisfy your reporter's curiosity?

Reed sets down the phone between them.

REED

What do you have to lose either way?

Kolchak takes a pull on his beer, then flips through the files, looking for something. He holds up an AUTOPSY PHOTO of a woman, CHEST CAVITY GAPING (discreetly) OPEN.

KOLCHAK

This is from my wife's autopsy.

Reed winces at the gruesomeness of the image.

KOLCHAK

Look at her left hand.

CLOSER: a BLOOD-RED BIRTHMARK on her left wrist. It looks like a squiggle. Or a SNAKE.

REED

What is it?

KOLCHAK

Hell if I know.

Kolchak takes out other autopsy photographs, setting them down in front of Reed.

KOLCHAK

But here's the same mark again. In Seattle, five months ago. And again in Sacramento, six weeks ago. And again, and again, and again.

REED

You're going to tell me all these people were attacked by werewolves?

KOLCHAK

That's just it. None of them were.

Kolchak points to one of the photographs, showing a WOMAN.

KOLCHAK

Laura Brau, convinced someone's going to burn her to death, locks herself in her home.

As Kolchak speaks, we CUT TO IMAGES of what he describes: A tidy suburban house. The empty rooms inside.

KOLCHAK

Her body's found the next morning, incinerated by 2,500-degree heat, but the floor beneath her isn't even singed...

In the bathroom, the Woman is splayed across the tile floor, LIMBS HIDEOUSLY CARBONIZED. Kolchak holds up another photo.

KOLCHAK

Glenn Barger kills himself in Idaho, his suicide note confessing to three murders, correct in every detail.

WE SEE BARGER writing out his suicide note... tilting a SHOTGUN at his face... CRIME SCENE PHOTOS of three victims.

KOLCHAK

Only the murders aren't committed until after his death...

(yet another photo)

Andre and Arlene Bormanis move into an old house with their three children. They report strange sounds, think they have a ghost.

We see: A big house, TALL WEEDS growing on the lawn. An OPEN WINDOW in the attic.

KOLCHAK

The police ignore it, until they're all found hanging in the attic.

We see FIVE SETS OF LEGS dangling in the air, the family's faces obscured by the window frame. The youngest child, barefoot, doesn't look to be older than 6 or 7.

REED

I don't understand the connection.

KOLCHAK

I don't, either. All I know is... there is one.

Despite herself, Reed can't help feeling creeped out by the stories and gruesome images.

REED

Did Emily Gale have this mark on her body?

KOLCHAK

I don't know. They won't release the autopsy pictures.

Reed says nothing.

KOLCHAK

But I know this: the creatures that killed her are part of something much, much larger. Something is happening. Something terrible. But no one sees it. No one wants to.

Reed's stomach tightens. Despite his lucidity, Kolchak is staring to sound like the mental patient he, in fact, was.

REED

I'll take that beer now.

KOLCHAK

You think I'm crazy.

Reed chooses her words with care.

REED

I think... not knowing who killed your wife, why she had to die...
(MORE)

REED (cont'd)
 it's like the man said. You
 desperately want an explanation.
 So you believe the unbelievable.

KOLCHAK
 Maybe. Or maybe you're afraid.

Kolchak hands her the beer.

REED
 Afraid of what?

KOLCHAK
 Afraid of having to act on your
 belief, if you admit what I'm
 saying is true.

REED
 That's what you're doing. Acting
 on your beliefs?

KOLCHAK
 That little girl is out there
 somewhere. I'm the only one asking
 the questions that could save her.

Reed senses how much this means to Kolchak. That, for
 Kolchak, saving the life of this little girl is in some way
 connected to his failure to save his wife.

REED
 Explain something to me, Carl.
 These creatures... why did they
 kill your wife? Why not you?

He doesn't answer, but we sense the question haunts him.
 Just then, the PHONE rings. Kolchak looks to Reed to get it.

REED
 Hello. Yeah, it's me. Jain...?

Reed looks surprised McManus is calling Kolchak, and even
 more surprised by whatever he's telling her.

REED
 (after a beat)
 OK. I'll tell him.
 (clicking off)
 That was Jain. He says he thinks
 some of your creatures were just
 sighted outside a boarding school.

Kolchak looks at his watch, setting down his beer. His
 demeanor instantly changing, charged with new purpose.

KOLCHAK

Want to see just how crazy I am?

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

HIGH AND WIDE, we see Kolchak's Trans Am snaking through the ribbons of freeway outside downtown L.A.... then SPEEDING THROUGH THE DESERT, overtaking other cars...

INT. KOLCHAK'S CAR - DRIVING - NIGHT

Kolchak plants a Blow-Pop in his mouth, offering one to Reed. She just looks at him, apprehension in her eyes. The Gumby swinging from the rear-view mirror like an unlucky talisman.

EXT. BOARDING SCHOOL - NIGHT

McManus, his nose again in his book, sits on the hood of an n.d. sedan, folding it closed as Kolchak's HEADLIGHTS appear. He pulls to a stop, he and Reed getting out of the car.

KOLCHAK

What happened?

MCMANUS

A girl inside heard scratching. When the headmaster went to look, he saw something run off. He told the police it looked like wolves.

REED

That's what you're basing this on?

MCMANUS

That, and those tracks we saw at the motel? They're here, too.

Reed's still not impressed, but Kolchak's already going to his trunk.

ANGLE - THE TRUNK POPS OPEN

A survivalist's wet dream -- flares, flashlights, rope, etc. Whatever Kolchak's expecting, he's ready for it.

Reed looks over his shoulder, wide-eyed at all the gak, as he pulls out a FLIT GUN, which looks something like an exterminator's spray can, then SLAMS THE TRUNK SHUT:

EXT. BOARDING SCHOOL - NIGHT

Kolchak, Reed and McManus round the corner, McManus leading the way, triggering motion-sensitive OUTDOOR LIGHTS.

KOLCHAK
That's why they left.

REED
The lights?

KOLCHAK
On motion sensors.

MCMANUS
Look here.

McManus points to the ground. Sure enough, we see TRACKS.

REED
What does this prove?

MCMANUS
That Kolchak's creatures were here.

REED
Or wolves, or coyotes, or
armadillos, for all I know.

MCMANUS
Armadillos?

REED
All I'm saying is this "proof" of
yours is anything but.

But Kolchak hasn't been listening. He turns a valve on the
flit gun, using the nozzle to SPRAY THE GROUND in wide,
arching circles.

REED
What are you doing?

KOLCHAK
Hunting.

Reed nods slowly, looking at McManus. She can't believe he's
going along with this craziness. As for her:

REED
Keys, please.

MCMANUS
What for?

REED
You can ride back with Elmer Fudd.
I've had enough.

As McManus surrenders the car key:

EXT. BOARDING SCHOOL - NIGHT

Reed rounds the corner, walking in the dark, feeling like a fool. Angry at herself for having been pulled all the way out here. When -- she hears *something move*.

Uh oh. We know what this means -- we heard the same sound way back in the Teaser before Henry left Emily. Reed stops in her tracks, left to wonder, when -- *there it is again*.

It's the sound of *something moving through the brush*. She turns her head toward the sound, too afraid to cry out for fear of provoking an attack. But *she can't see anything*.

The sounds grow closer. Coming from MORE THAN ONE DIRECTION. Then, from the corner of her eye, she sees it. It's the outline of one of the creatures, EYES GLOWING.

Reed's heart is thumping hard in her chest. In that moment, she knows: everything Kolchak said is true. Only she's not going to live to tell him because --

ANOTHER CREATURE appears. Reed, trapped, MAKES A RUN FOR IT, moving as fast as she can, when -- ONE OF THE CREATURES LEAPS AT HER, knocking Reed off her feet.

She falls to the ground, turning, expecting to die, when -- BLINDING LIGHT SHINES IN HER EYES. Reed raises a hand, trying to see. We hear the ROAR OF AN ENGINE, then:

WIDER - KOLCHAK'S TRANS AM

Bears down on Reed. She ROLLS OUT OF THE WAY just as his car SPEEDS PAST HER, BRAKES FLARING. Kolchak gets out, seeing the creatures run into the darkness as he goes to help Reed.

KOLCHAK

You OK?

She nods, shaken but otherwise unhurt. McManus, a few steps behind, stands on the other side of the car, looking down.

MCMANUS

Kolchak.

Kolchak and Reed cross to see... a CREATURE lies dead on the ground, hit by Kolchak's car. McManus raises his camera, SNAPPING PICTURES. Irrefutable proof at last.

ACT FOUR

INT. COUNTY MORGUE - NIGHT

Agent Fain pushes through the swinging doors, the Coroner a step behind.

AGENT FAIN

It's a coyote.

He's talking to... Kolchak, Reed and McManus, who've been waiting. Reed is incredulous.

REED

What?!

Fain looks to the Coroner for confirmation. He speaks hesitantly, clearly feeling himself under Fain's supervision.

CORONER

The common *Canis latrans*, found throughout North America.

REED

That doesn't look like any coyote I've ever seen.

MCMANUS

We saw its tracks! It left five marks in the ground.

CORONER

A coyote does, in fact, have five digits on its forefeet. It typically leaves fewer marks because it's digitigrade --

AGENT FAIN

(explaining)

It walks on its toes.

CORONER

This animal has apparently sustained some serious injuries, having been involved in some kind of accident, hit by a car perhaps, which accounts for its unusual appearance. It also may account for the atypical gait you describe.

Reed and McManus can't believe what they're hearing, but Kolchak isn't surprised by the whitewash. Expected it, even.

KOLCHAK

Did you find anything physiologically unusual about the animal, Dr.? Other than the claws, the fangs, the hide, and its "unusual appearance," that is?
 (with an eye to Fain)
 Anything you're willing to put in your report?

The Coroner doesn't like Kolchak, or his dry sarcasm.

CORONER

I'm not sure what you're asking, Mr. Kolchak.

KOLCHAK

The animal's reproductive organs. What does your autopsy have to say about them?

The Coroner looks to Agent Fain before answering.

CORONER

This animal possesses... no sex organs. It's unable to reproduce.

That's what Kolchak thought. He nods, then turns on his heel, leaving.

REED

What does that mean?

AGENT FAIN

Kolchak developed a "theory" that these "creatures" take the fetuses of pregnant women because they can't have offspring of their own.

REED

Why would he think that? Emily Gale was pregnant, but his wife --

AGENT FAIN

She was. It was discovered in the autopsy. Apparently, she was going to tell him the night she died.

Reed looks after Kolchak, her perception of him changing once again. Feeling an unexpected poignancy.

AGENT FAIN
 Kolchak's preying on your good
 intentions. Don't be fooled.

But Reed's way past listening to him and heads outside.

EXT. COUNTY MORGUE - NIGHT

Kolchak is at his car, about to get in, when Reed and McManus
 exit the building, coming toward him.

REED
 We'll write the story anyway.

KOLCHAK
 Saying what?

REED
 What we saw.

MCMANUS
 I've got the pictures to prove it.

KOLCHAK
 To prove what? That you saw a
 coyote and mistook it for something
 else? What other story is there?

Reed is silent. Seeing the truth in Kolchak's words. Then:

REED
 We know what we saw.

KOLCHAK
 But that's not worth much, is it?

Kolchak gets in his car to leave. McManus holds the door.

MCMANUS
 Wherever you're going, we're going
 with you.

Off Kolchak, reading their determination:

EXT. BOARDING SCHOOL - NIGHT

Kolchak walks back behind the school, carrying some kind of
 oversized LIGHT in his hand. Reed and McManus with him.

KOLCHAK
 When I hit that creature, the
 others scattered. One ran this
 way.

REED

What was that stuff you sprayed out here?

KOLCHAK

Zinc sulfide.

REED

What's that do?

KOLCHAK

This.

Kolchak kneels down, CLICKING ON THE LIGHT. It's a BLACK LIGHT, as it turns out, and the effect it has on the dark earth in front of them is immediate:

TRACKS APPEAR, GLOWING AN UNEARTHLY BLUE-GREEN in the black light. They lead off into the desert. Off Reed and McManus, the "holy shit" looks on their faces, we CUT TO:

CLOSE ON THE BLACK LIGHT, now clamped to the hood of Kolchak's car, like a police light. We're:

EXT. DESERT - DRIVING - NIGHT

Kolchak's Trans Am racing down a desert road at high speed, following the glowing trail of tracks through the darkness.

INSIDE KOLCHAK'S CAR, McManus has his arm out the window, keeping the light trained on the tracks.

REED

Carl --

Reed sees the tracks VEER AWAY FROM THE ROAD, across the desert floor. Kolchak sees it, too.

KOLCHAK

Hold on.

He turns the wheel, going OFF ROAD. The Trans Am kicking up dust, as we CUT TO:

The TRANS AM'S BRAKE LIGHTS SHINE BIG IN FRAME. Kolchak, Reed and McManus get out of the car. They're in the middle of the desert, miles away from help.

We don't understand why they've stopped until Kolchak unclips the black light, carrying it with him to shine on the ground, where we see... the tracks HAVE STOPPED.

REED
Your spray wear off?

Kolchak points to a rutted groove in the ground.

KOLCHAK
What's this?

MCMANUS
A trail.

KOLCHAK
Dirt bike trail?

MCMANUS
Yeah, maybe.

Kolchak pulls a GPS DEVICE from his pocket, what he sees there confirming his suspicions.

KOLCHAK
This is where Emily Gale's body was found. Which means...

He scans the desert landscape, seeing an OUTCROPPING in the distance. The dark MOUTH OF A CAVE.

KOLCHAK
... we're close.

INT. DESERT - CAVE - NIGHT

EERIE SHADOWS and REFLECTIONS crawl across the hood of the Trans Am. We're MOVING SLOWLY inside the cave, headlights pointing yellow spokes of light into the darkness ahead.

The car eases to a stop, the cave too narrow to drive farther. Kolchak, Reed and McManus step out, figures silhouetted by the car lights. Kolchak holds up a hand.

KOLCHAK
You hear that?

Reed and McManus stand very still, listening. They hear nothing, and then -- *there it is*. The DISTANT YOWL of an animal, perhaps. Or a CRY.

REED
What is it?

Kolchak doesn't know. As Reed follows him into the darkness, McManus' camera at the ready, CUT TO:

DEEPER IN THE CAVE

Pitch dark. We see little more than the outlines of our heroes' faces, lit by the distant headlights. When --

KOLCHAK

There it is again.

Still faint, but it sounds like a WOUNDED ANIMAL. Kolchak moves toward the sound, finding:

JULIE, the Medlocks' little girl. She's huddled on the floor, filthy and cold in her pajamas, but ALIVE.

KOLCHAK

Julie, we're taking you home, OK?

The girl's in shock, not making eye contact. Kolchak scoops her into his arms --

REED

Carl.

Kolchak turns around and... *Oh shit.* They're not ALONE.

In the darkness between them and the car, we see the shapes of the CREATURES. There are three of them, EYES GLOWING. They move forward slowly, circling as if readying an attack.

Kolchak looks to McManus.

KOLCHAK

Got automatic flash on that thing?

REED

You're kidding, right?

McManus holds up his camera.

MCMANUS

Right here.

KOLCHAK

When I say "go." Ready... GO!

McManus' FLASH STROBES WILDLY, like lightning strikes BRIGHTLY ILLUMINATING THE CAVE IN SPLIT-SECOND STUTTERS as --

Reed, McManus and Kolchak run for the car, Kolchak holding the girl tight. The flashes make it look like they're running stop-motion, the four of them just at the car, as --

The FLASHES STOP, the camera battery dead. But they're already getting inside, Kolchak turning over the ignition and jamming it into reverse when -- WHAM-WHAM!

TWO CREATURES FLY AGAINST THE WINDSHIELD, banging and scratching. Julie screams, burying her face against Kolchak, who stays focused on getting the hell out of there, when --

WHAM! The third creature BREAKS THROUGH THE PASSENGER WINDOW, CLAWING AND SNAPPING AT REED. She screams, trying to fight it off, but its CLAWS ARE GNASHING INTO HER SHOULDER, while --

The Trans Am roars in reverse through the narrow cave, Kolchak putting his pedal to the metal --

McManus, in the back seat, uses his CAMERA TO SMASH THE CREATURE'S HEAD, trying to beat it off Reed, as --

Kolchak suddenly swerves the car to the right, SMASHING THE CREATURE AGAINST THE SIDE OF THE CAVE WALL. It falls to the ground, screaming in pain, just as --

THE CAR BLASTS BACKWARDS OUT OF THE CAVE... INTO SUNLIGHT. Dawn has broken, the sun shining over the horizon. The remaining creatures drop off the windshield, FLEEING.

Kolchak glances at Reed, gripping at the BLOOD OOZING from her shoulder, then hits the brake --

The car goes into a POWER-SLIDE. Kolchak backs into a sharp L turn, then shifts into drive, heading toward the main road, a TRAIL OF DUST rising behind. We HOLD ON THIS IMAGE, as...

MUSIC RISES, taking us into the coming day, where we see:

JULIE FALLS INTO HER MOTHER'S ARMS, Trish holding her tight in her hospital bed, while Ed looks on, deeply moved and relieved. Kolchak watches from the door...

POLICE SEARCH THE CAVE, Agent Fain in charge. Jain McManus is there with his camera, as is Vincenzo...

KOLCHAK SITS AT HIS DESK IN THE NEWSROOM, staring at a blank screen. He looks over to see... Vincenzo in his office, watching Kolchak through the glass wall, waiting for his story...

KOLCHAK WALKS PAST COPS, LEAVING THE CAVE. Their calm manner suggests THEY HAVE FOUND NOTHING. Kolchak watches them go, looking back into the darkness of the cave...

IN THE HOSPITAL, Trish strokes Julie's hair, crying tears of joy and relief. Only Kolchak disturbed to see, on Julie's hand, a small BLOOD-RED BIRTHMARK. In the shape of a snake...

KOLCHAK AT HIS DESK, staring at Vincenzo. Making a decision. As he starts to WRITE, the MUSIC FINISHES, bringing us to:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

City lights through the windows. Kolchak enters quietly, approaching a bed, where Reed lies sleeping, her right shoulder bandaged and taped.

Her face looks peaceful and very beautiful in sleep. Ever so carefully, Kolchak picks up her left hand. He holds it for a moment, long enough for us to wonder at his feelings for her.

Then he carefully turns her hand over, checking to see whether she, too, bears the strange birthmark.

REED (O.S.)

You're here.

Kolchak looks up. Reed, just awakened, sees him holding her hand. A gesture of tenderness that surprises (pleases?) her. Kolchak lets go of her hand, seeing it is, in fact, UNMARKED.

KOLCHAK

How are you feeling?

REED

Upset.

Reed reaches for a copy of the Beacon on her bedside table. The headline reads "Missing Girl Found Alive."

REED

The story you wrote under our byline. It's a lie.

KOLCHAK

It's what the police said happened.

REED

That the girl was hiding in that cave? That they're still looking for whoever kidnapped her?

KOLCHAK

They are.

REED

But what about Jain's pictures?

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that this is essential for ensuring transparency and accountability in the organization's operations.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and tools used to collect and analyze data. It highlights the need for a systematic approach to data collection and the importance of using reliable and valid measurement instruments.

3. The third part of the document describes the process of data analysis and interpretation. It discusses the various statistical techniques used to analyze the data and the importance of interpreting the results in the context of the research objectives and the organization's needs.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the importance of reporting the results of the research and the implications for the organization. It emphasizes that the findings should be presented in a clear and concise manner that is accessible to all stakeholders.

5. The fifth part of the document discusses the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of the research and the implications for the organization's future operations. It emphasizes that the research should be used to inform decision-making and to improve the organization's performance.

6. The sixth part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the research data. It emphasizes that the data should be stored securely and that access should be restricted to authorized personnel only.

KOLCHAK

What about them? What do they prove?

REED

Those creatures took that girl. You know it, Jain knows it, and I know it.

KOLCHAK

Tony Vincenzo doesn't. We couldn't even get that story into print --

REED

That's a cop-out.

KOLCHAK

Is it? How long would I keep this job if I turned in a story making those claims? How long would you?

REED

That doesn't matter --

KOLCHAK

It does to me. I have things I need to find out, to understand, for myself. I'm still a murder suspect in Arizona; I can't exactly become a cop. Being a reporter is the only way I have to investigate, to ask questions.

REED

The public needs to know --

KOLCHAK

The public doesn't want to know. You didn't.

Reed makes no answer. Knowing he's right.

KOLCHAK

When I get the answers -- the real answers -- I'll print them. And then they'll believe. Then they'll have to believe.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Through the window, we see Kolchak with Reed. We TRACK OUTSIDE the darkened masonry of the building, to find the skyscrapers of downtown L.A. beyond. MUSIC rising once more:

KOLCHAK (V.O.)
I have learned there are things in
the dark...

We see KOLCHAK DRIVING. The late-night signs of the city reflected on his windshield.

KOLCHAK (V.O.)
Things adults deny, but children
are right to fear.

Kolchak's WORDS SUPER ACROSS THE SCREEN, typed there as they were in the Teaser, taking us back to:

CLOSE - KOLCHAK'S COMPUTER, where he writes these words. Recording the truth, if not for the paper, then for himself.

KOLCHAK (V.O.)
Look into the darkness long enough,
and you will begin to see them.

Kolchak finishes writing. He ejects a CD-ROM, putting it in a drawer, then takes off his watch, rubbing his wrist.

KOLCHAK (V.O.)
But there is a darkness you cannot
see into...

In the car, Kolchak's POLICE SCANNER BUZZES. A radio call, piquing his interest. He swings his car into a wide U-turn on the empty city street, heading toward the call:

KOLCHAK
...however unflinching your gaze.

And now we understand why Kolchak was so disturbed to see the mark on the girl's hand, and looked for it on Reed...

KOLCHAK (V.O.)
Not the darkness without...

At his desk, he bears the same BLOOD-RED BIRTHMARK. Kolchak stares at it, haunted by its mystery...

KOLCHAK (V.O.)
... but the darkness within.

As Kolchak's car drives past, heading toward the lights of the city, the night beyond:

FADE OUT

The End