

The logo for 'Skywake Endgame' features the word 'SKYWAKE' in a large, bold, italicized sans-serif font. A thick black arc curves around the left side of the 'S' and 'K'. Below 'SKYWAKE', the word 'ENDGAME' is written in a smaller, bold, italicized sans-serif font.

SKYWAKE
ENDGAME

Also by Jamie Russell

SkyWake Invasion

SkyWake Battlefield

SKYWAKE ENDGAME

JAMIE RUSSELL



WALKER
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For Mum, with thanks for all the books

THE STORY SO FAR...

Casey Henderson (gamertag: **CASEY_FLOW**) has discovered that her favourite video game, *SkyWake*, isn't just a game. It's actually a secret training tool created by an evil alien race, the Arcturians (aka the Red Eyes), who are using it to train teen gamers to fight in a war on a distant alien planet.

Invited to a gaming tournament in a London shopping centre to find the UK's best *SkyWake* players, Casey met her online teammates – **FISH_HEAD_04**, **SPOCK5_BR@IN**, **XxxELITESNIP3RxxxX** and **CH33ZEMUNK3Y** – in real life for the first time.

When the Red Eyes invaded the tournament, they abducted hundreds of players, including Casey's little brother, Pete, and egotistical YouTube streamer Xander Kane. Casey and her teammates were the only ones able to fight back using the skills they'd learned from the

game. During the battle, Casey discovered the power of “flow: that state of mind when you’re totally in the zone.

After failing to stop the Red Eyes on Earth, Casey and the rest of the gamers were taken into deep space and forced to fight on the planet Hosin. Here they found the Red Eyes locked in an endless battle with their mortal enemies, the tentacled, telepathic Bactu (aka the Squids).

As Casey and her teammates tried to escape from the battlefield, the Squids reached out to her. They explained that the Red Eyes were searching for an ancient Bactu artefact called the psionic array, a tool that could be used to take over the galaxy. In return for Casey’s help, the Squids showed her how to develop telepathic powers. Casey used these new abilities to fight the Red Eyes, including her nemesis, Scratch.

When Pete and Xander discovered that the legendary psionic array was actually hidden on Earth, they decided to join forces with the Red Eyes in an attempt to get themselves home safely. Torn between heading back to Earth to prevent a Red Eye invasion and saving Hosin from a planet-killing bomb, Casey and her team decided to stay behind to protect the Squids.

With the bomb successfully stopped, Casey and her friends headed home in pursuit of the Red Eyes.

But, after a malfunction on their ship's hyperdrive, they arrive home *four years* later than planned! In this time, the Red Eyes have overrun the planet and, with Pete and Xander's help, found the psionic array. They're now ready to activate it.

Armed with everything they've learned from their adventure on Hosin, can Casey and her friends stop the Red Eyes before it's too late?

O

YOU CAN'T SELL DAD ON EBAY

Three months after Casey's dad died, her mum decided it was time to clear out his belongings. She started early one Saturday morning in a flurry of activity. Clothes were removed from wardrobes, papers were sorted into piles marked *Keep* and *Shred*, and the rest of his possessions were laid out on the double bed in her parents' room.

Casey watched from the doorway as her mum hugged each jumper and checked shirt, inhaling what little scent of her husband remained on them. Then, one by one, she put the clothes into black bin bags. It was the bags Casey objected to the most. It seemed wrong. Disrespectful, almost.

"Why is she doing this now?" Casey's little brother Pete asked as they made breakfast together. He was four years younger than Casey, small for his age, and had

a habit of asking her annoying questions as if she was his own personal Alexa.

“Because she thinks it’s the right time,” Casey explained, passing him a bowl of cornflakes. “Don’t make a fuss. It’s hard enough on her already.”

“It’s hard on all of us,” Pete muttered, hitting the TV remote. He ate in silence, his eyes fixed on the screen, the spoon passing mechanically from bowl to mouth and back again. Casey poured her dry cereal back into the box. She didn’t feel hungry.

An hour later, Mum came downstairs with six bin bags full of clothes and two more packed with paper destined for the shredder. Casey could tell that she’d been crying.

“Who should we donate the clothes to?” Mum asked them, trying to sound upbeat.

“Dad always liked animals,” Pete said, muting the TV. “Maybe we can give them to the RSPCA.”

Mum nodded, satisfied. She started assembling flat-packed cardboard boxes one by one, sealing their undersides with brown packing tape. The roll screeched as she stretched it out and cut it with her teeth. “The next thing we need to decide is what to do with all the video games,” she said, half to herself.

Casey and Pete looked at one another uncertainly.

“What do you mean?” Casey asked.

“All those games and console things in your dad’s study. There are hundreds of them.”

Casey’s breath caught in her throat. “You can’t give those away! That’s Dad’s collection. He spent years building it.”

“Don’t be silly. We’re not giving it away. We’re *selling* it.”

“*What?*” Pete cried in outrage. “No!”

Mum bit another piece of packing tape off the roll and shrugged. “We could do with the money.”

Casey felt sick. Her dad’s collection of retro video games was something she and Pete both loved. He’d started building it before they were born, piecing it together cartridge by cartridge, disc by disc. Some of the games were still in their original cellophane, never opened or played because they were so valuable. Others had been imported from Japan, their colourful boxes rare and exotic. There were consoles and computers, too. Ataris, Spectrums, Commodores, Nintendos, Segas, PlayStations, all kinds of kit and hardware, with the cables looped and tied and laid out in drawers. Dad, a soldier in the Royal Engineers, had been a neat freak.

For Casey and Pete, the study had been the video game equivalent of a sweetshop. Dad had been strict – no one was ever allowed in unsupervised –

but whenever he was at home on a Saturday morning, he'd show them some ancient video game like *Manic Miner*, *Donkey Kong*, *Street Fighter* or *Halo*. While they played, he'd talk to them about the game's design and mechanics and explain what made it special. They were the best kinds of lessons.

Mum's voice interrupted Casey's thoughts. "There's also that *Space Invaders* machine in the garage," she went on, assembling the last of the packing boxes. "Someone's going to have to take it away. Bloody great big thing. Maybe we can sell it on eBay..."

"You can't!" Casey cried.

Mum put down the packing tape and turned to face her. "Casey, I know this is hard. But I have to."

"You've never liked gaming," Casey complained. "You always used to say it was a waste of time."

Mum's brow furrowed and she let out a sigh that was deep and sad. Casey instantly regretted her words. She knew how much her mum had suffered since news had come of their dad's death in Afghanistan. He'd died a hero, defusing a car bomb outside a school in Kabul, and he'd been awarded a posthumous medal for bravery. But the medal was no comfort to any of them. They'd spent the last few months wandering around in their own private bubbles of grief.

"I didn't want to worry you about this," Mum said,

taking her daughter's hand. "But we need money. My shifts at the hospital are being reduced and there are debts and bills to pay. Even with your dad's pension I can't make ends meet on my own. If I don't do something soon, we're going to fall behind on the mortgage. You understand what that means, right?"

Casey bit her lip and nodded.

The grim expression clouding over Pete's face told her he did too.

"How much do you think the collection's worth?" Mum asked.

"A lot," Pete chipped in. "Probably thousands."

"Thousands? Really?" Mum looked at Casey for confirmation, her eyes wide as dinner plates.

Casey shrugged, feeling conflicted. She didn't want her dad's collection reduced to a price. It was about more than money to him. It was his passion. But if they were at risk of losing the house, maybe they had no choice. Pete stepped in.

"There's a factory-sealed early copy of *Luigi's Mansion* for the GameCube," he told their mum breathlessly. "That must be worth over a thousand pounds alone. Plus, there's an unopened *Mega Man V* Game Boy cartridge and a Hong Kong import of *Super Mario Bros. 2*. That's well rare. Lots of others, too. We'd get loads of money for the whole collection."

“We’ll need someone to come and value it first,” Casey pointed out.

“Like one of those guys from the second-hand gaming shop?” Pete suggested.

“No,” Casey said. “It needs to be someone independent. Not the person you want to buy it, otherwise they’ll just give you a low-ball figure.” She looked over at her mum hoping she’d understand. Dad had always been great at making deals.

“Where would I find an expert like that?” Mum asked.

“Dad had a card for someone in his office, a guy he used to buy things from. A retro games dealer. He might help us. I can find it, but there’s one condition.”

“Is there now?” Mum said and arched her eyebrows, amused by the firmness in Casey’s voice. “And what condition is that?”

“The *Space Invaders* machine stays,” Casey said. “We’re not selling it.”

“I’m not sure I can agree to that...” Mum began.

“Dad bought it for a couple of hundred quid off that guy in the old games arcade. I was with him. It’s half-broken, anyway.”

Mum shook her head. “It’s so big and ugly.”

“I know, but I want to keep it.”

Pete rolled his eyes. “It’s not even a good game,” he

complained. “We should keep something decent like Dad’s console collection. *Space Invaders* is stupid. You just move and shoot, and it’s the same thing over and over.”

Casey put her hands on her hips and waited until her brother was finished. Then she looked at her mum. Now it was her turn to arch her eyebrows questioningly.

“OK,” Mum said, with a sigh of exasperation. “It can stay. But you have to help me pack up the rest of the collection and find me the name of that dealer.” She headed back upstairs to continue sorting their dad’s belongings.

Pete looked at his sister, sullen. “Why do you even like that game?”

“It’s the original arcade classic. It’s about heroism – one person making a difference and saving the whole world.”

“One person can’t make a difference,” Pete said, his voice bitter. “Just look at what happened to Dad.” He pushed past her and headed upstairs after their mum.

Casey wanted to call after him and tell him he was wrong, but she knew he wouldn’t listen to her. He never did.