INVISIBLE WOUNDS

By James Leach

Genre: Historical Drama / War Drama

Logline: When a childhood love dies in the Bristol Blitz, a boy grows into a man defined by silence—until finally speaking her name becomes an act of survival.

Synopsis

When Jamie Leach returns to England carrying his father's ashes, he retraces a story that began in 1940 in the quiet Yorkshire village of Pool-in-Wharfedale.

Nine-year-old Billy Leach lives in a vicarage with his mother, Mary, and father, James, an Anglican reverend. Amid blackout curtains, gas masks, rationing, and air-raid drills, Billy forms a deep bond with Barbara Johnston, a young evacuee sent north from Bristol for safety.

Their friendship grows through walks to school, afternoons picking blackberries, and childhood adventures beneath skies increasingly filled with military aircraft. In a world being transformed by war, Barbara becomes Billy's closest friend and emotional refuge.

Believing the danger in Bristol is easing, Barbara's parents decide to take her home. Billy and Barbara desperately resist being separated, but the adults assure them it will only be temporary.

On November 24, 1940, German bombers devastate Bristol. Barbara and her parents are killed when their home is destroyed.

Billy's family receives the news but chooses not to tell him. Hoping to protect a nine-year-old from unbearable grief, they instead create a silence that follows him for decades. Billy knows Barbara is gone but never understands why, gradually convincing himself that somehow he failed her.

The war ends, but Billy's wounds remain. His family emigrates to the United States, where he struggles to adapt to a new country and a new life. Fireworks recall falling bombs, unfamiliar surroundings reinforce his isolation, and additional tragedies—including the deaths of close friends and a girlfriend—strengthen his belief that everyone he loves eventually disappears.

As an adult, Billy buries his grief rather than confronting it. Alcohol becomes an escape until years of accumulated loss push him toward self-destruction. After a dangerous episode

witnessed by his children, Billy finally accepts that he needs help.

Through counseling and a grief support group, he begins confronting memories he has suppressed since childhood. The most difficult step is also the simplest: saying Barbara's name aloud.

Billy eventually visits his aging mother and asks the question he has carried throughout his life—why did his parents never tell him what happened?

Mary admits that she and James believed silence would protect him. They simply did not know how to let their child hurt. Instead, their protection left Billy to carry grief he could neither understand nor express.

Recognizing that survival is not the same as healing, Billy begins speaking openly about Barbara, the war, and the losses that shaped him. The memories remain, but they no longer have to remain hidden.

Years later, Jamie returns to the Yorkshire vicarage where his father's story began. He scatters Billy's ashes through the orchard as memories of two children running beneath the trees seem to emerge from the past.

Billy and Barbara are together again—not as ghosts to be feared, but as memories finally allowed to exist.

Jamie watches the last of his father's ashes disappear into the wind and quietly acknowledges that he, too, understands the presence Billy carried throughout his life.

The wounds of war were not always visible.

Neither was the healing.