

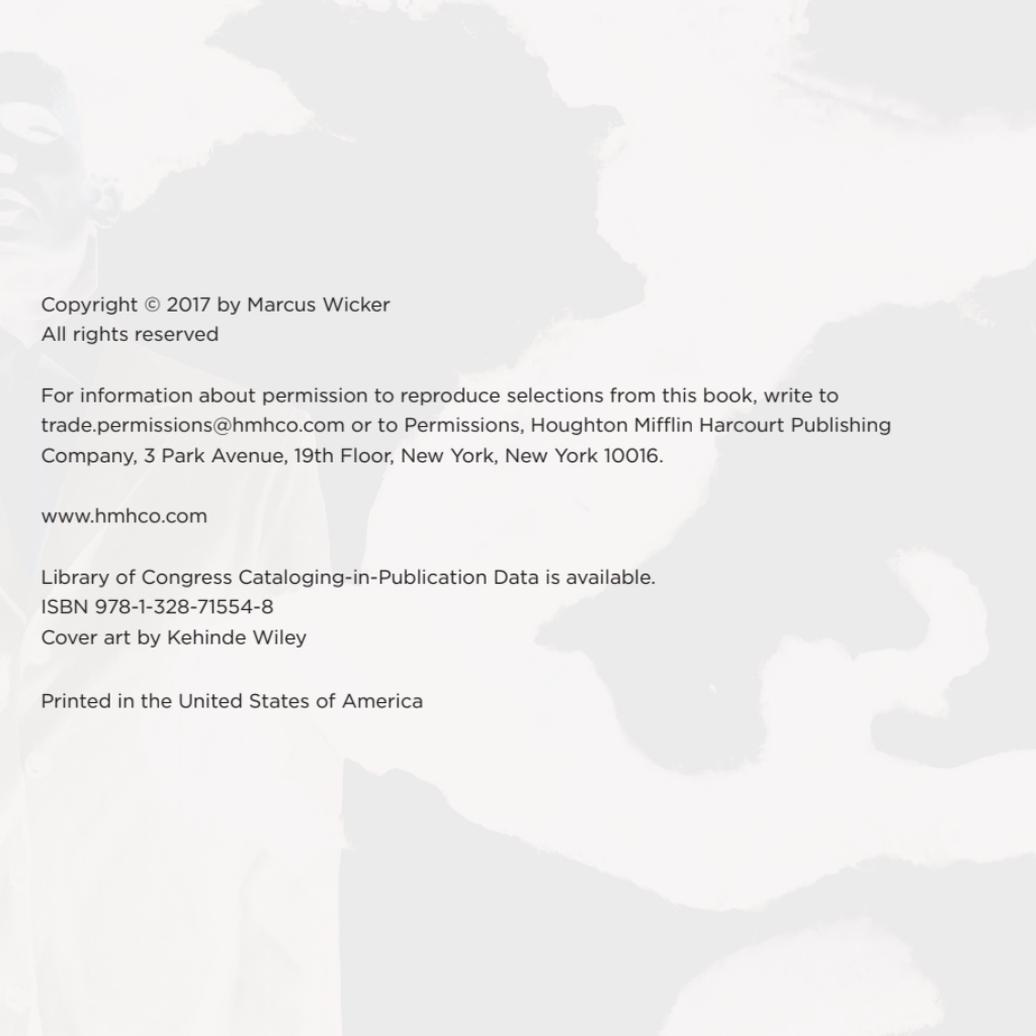
PARENTAL  
ADVISORY  
EXPLICIT CONTENT

# SILENCER

*poems*

MARCUS WICKER

**(EP)**



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## Artist's Note:

The summer of my sixteenth birthday, I took a job at Circuit City to start saving toward a car. The first two months I worked mornings, pretty much solo, in the media department, slinging Bonnie Raitt and Chris Botti CDs to suburban moms and dads browsing the racks on their lunch breaks. When class was back in session, I picked up a few late-afternoon shifts where I was paired with R.—a newly transferred manager and certified hip hop head, if I had ever met one (I hadn't). R. kept a gang of “Not for Resale” CDs in a cardboard box under lock and key, and every so often he'd slide a few to me and my boy Wally B., usually as rewards for selling an extended warranty plan on a Discman or cordless phone.

One night a kid about my age came in looking to cop Nelly's “Country Grammar,” and R. lied, said we were fresh out. I told him I wouldn't mind getting my hands on the single either. In that moment, something changed in him. He stormed into his office, packed up every free commercial rap album he could find and told me to meet him behind the store. I'll never forget the quick work an aerosol can and a Bic lighter made of that coveted cardboard box. I watched the plastic jewel cases melt down to slime as he went on some long-winded tangent about the difference between an emcee and a rapper. He swept the rubble out of sight and, right before we closed the store, bought me two albums that changed my life: *Mos Def & Talib Kweli Are Blackstar*, and Raekwon's *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx*.

Some seventeen years ago I fell in love with hip hop—the lyric dexterity, cinematic narratives, and convergence of book and street smarts were my real introduction to poetry—and I never looked back.

## TAKING AIM AT A MACY'S CHANGING ROOM MIRROR, I BLAME TELEVISION

No chain link fences leapt in a single bound. No juke move Nike Commercial, speeding bullet Skittles-hued Cross Trainers. No brown skin Adonis weaving trails of industrial Vaseline down a cobblestone street. Heisman-shucking trash receptacles. Grand Jeté over the little blue recycling bin, a prism of clouds rising beneath his feet. Nobody all-fucked in boot cuffs wide enough to cloak court-appointed tethers. Or slumped over, hoodie-shrouded—*sheepishly scary* according to one eyewitness. Definitely not going to be your Louis V Sweat Suit red carpet fashion review, coming at you live from E! & Fox News outside of the morgue. No chance for homeboy in the peekaboo boxer shorts. Homeboy with the frozen wrists. Iced. Homeslice with the paisley, Pretty Flacko Flag flying by the seat of low-slung denim—no defense attorney gets to call me *Gang Related*. Tupac in a mock-leather bomber. No statement taken from the Clint Eastwood of your particular planned community, saying he had the right to stand his ground at the Super Target. Because my flat-billed, fitted cap cast a *shady* shadow over his shoulder in the checkout line. No, siree. See, I practice self target practice. There is no sight of me in my wears. I, bedecked in No-Wrinkle Dockers. Sensible navy blazer. Barack Obama Tie, Double Consciousness-knotted. Stock dandelion pinned to the skin of an American lapel with his head blown off.

## IN DEFENSE OF BALLIN' ON A BUDGET

*Too many people spend money they haven't earned, to buy things they don't want, to impress people they don't like. —Will Smith*

Damn Will—they've got you sounding mighty Uncle Phil in these streets. Like the still calling the Ketel One cheap. How, where we started from is never done with our undoing. To get the job, always stay starched, creased to death. Fresher than the interviewer. Stop acting brand new like you aren't Slick Rick the Ruler of this particular gem crow era. Like you didn't whip a leased Jeep in '89. Nigga, please. The Maybach's in your blind spot. Go back to that playground in middle-class West Philly, where you were kicking silly rhymes trying to king yourself. When rocking a jiggy blazer, paisley, with a snapback seemed like fun. To impress upon the self, "I'm someone."

This EP includes six tracks from my forthcoming book, **SILENCER**—poems about race in America, gun violence towards African Americans, money/the haves and have-nots, fashion, sex, God—all funneled through the slant rhymes and cadences of the music, no, the culture that helped shape my understanding of this nation's present state. You'll note "samples" from Pac, Kendrick Lamar, LL Cool J, and others, but more than that, I hope you'll hear the bridge I'm trying to build between verse and bars. If you like what you read, and feel so moved, feel free to shout me out on social media. If you're interested in reading the entire collection, dropping a blurb, please reach out to my publicist, Leila Meglio. Regardless, I appreciate your time.

Many Thanks,

*Marcus Wicker*



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