

Who is Lip / Eric?

LIP / ERIC

Age: 15 | Baltimore, Maryland

The Kid. The Protector. The Boy Trying to Become a Man Too Fast.

UNDERSTANDING LIP

Everybody calls him **Lip**.

His mother calls him **Eric**.

That difference tells you almost everything you need to know about the character.

Lip is who he is trying to become outside. Eric is who he still is at home.

At 15 years old, Lip desperately wants the world to see him as someone who isn't afraid. He wants respect. He wants people to stop looking at him like a kid.

But underneath the image he's trying to create is a teenage boy dealing with something far more frightening than anything happening in the streets:

His mother is seriously ill.

And Lip is terrified of losing her.

WHO HE IS

Lip is growing up too fast.

At an age when most kids should be worrying about school, girls, friends and what they're doing this weekend, Lip is worrying about medication, food, his mother's health and whether she's getting worse.

He sees things a 15-year-old shouldn't have to see.

And he feels powerless.

That's important.

Because outside the house, Lip is trying desperately to create the opposite feeling.

He wants to feel powerful.

The attitude.

The image.

The shotgun photograph.

The desire to appear hard.

Those things aren't Lip.

They're **armor**.

HIS PERSONALITY

Lip is **loyal, emotional, impressionable, protective, proud, sensitive, impulsive and desperate to be respected.**

He has attitude.

He can be funny.

He can become angry quickly.

He doesn't like being embarrassed.

And being treated like a little kid gets underneath his skin.
But Lip also has a tremendous amount of love inside him.
Especially for his mother.
That's the side of him he doesn't show everybody.

LIP VS. ERIC

This is one of the most important things for the actor to understand.

Outside the house, he's LIP.

His walk may change.
His voice may change.
His posture may change.
He doesn't want anyone seeing weakness.
He's trying to establish who he is.

Around his mother, he's ERIC.

The performance should soften.
He listens to her.
He worries about her.
He brings her food.
He makes sure she has her medication.
He watches her when she isn't looking.
And sometimes—

he's simply her little boy.

Don't make these feel like two completely different characters.
They're two sides of the same kid.

LIP & HIS MOTHER

This is the heart of Lip.

He loves his mother more than anything in the world.

When he walks into her bedroom, all the street performance should begin disappearing.

He notices things.
How she's breathing.
How tired she looks.
Whether she's eaten.
Whether she's taken her medication.
There may be days when his mother tells him she's okay—
and Lip knows she's lying.
He just doesn't know what to do about it.
That's devastating for him.

Lip wants to fix something he **cannot fix**.

And for a young man desperately trying to feel powerful, there is nothing worse than feeling helpless.

DON'T PLAY THE SADNESS

When you're sitting beside your sick mother, don't enter the scene thinking:

"My mother is sick, so I need to look sad."

Try to **hide how scared you are from her.**

That's stronger.

Lip doesn't want his mother worrying about him while she's sick.

He may smile when he doesn't feel like smiling.

He may tell her everything is fine.

He may change the subject.

He may look away when emotion hits him.

Sometimes love looks like trying desperately **not to cry in front of someone.**

LIP & PHIL

Phil knows how to get underneath Lip's skin.

He's older.

He's a bully.

And he knows Lip wants respect.

But when Phil knocks Lip's mother's medication away and eventually steps on the bottle, the situation changes.

This is no longer about Lip's pride.

Those pills belong to his mother.

Lip needs them.

Suddenly the kid trying to look tough isn't performing anymore.

He's scared.

He's angry.

He's desperate.

When Lip says:

"Yo, get off that."

Don't play it like a cool threat.

The meaning underneath it is:

"My mother needs that. Please don't do this."

Lip may never actually say those words.

But the actor should know they're underneath the line.

That makes the moment much more powerful.

LIP & TAVON

Lip is fascinated by what Tavon represents.

Tavon has something Lip desperately wants:

Respect.

People take Tavon seriously.

People move differently when he's around.

Lip sees that.

But Tavon sees through Lip almost immediately.

The picture with the shotgun doesn't impress him.
The attitude doesn't impress him.
The performance doesn't impress him.
Because Tavon recognizes exactly what Lip is doing.
He's pretending to be dangerous because he doesn't want the world to see that he's vulnerable.
Tavon's message to him is:
"Stop acting like dinner."
That line should stay with Lip.
Because Tavon isn't simply talking about the streets.
He's telling Lip:
The world can tell when you're pretending.

WHY LIP WANTS TO BE HARD

Don't judge him.
Understand him.
Lip's world has taught him that vulnerability can be dangerous.
At home, he watches someone he loves becoming weaker physically.
Outside, people test him.
Bullies test him.
Older guys test him.
The streets test him.
So Lip begins building an identity that says:
YOU CAN'T HURT ME.
The tragedy is—
he's already hurting.

FOR THE ACTOR

DO NOT PLAY "LITTLE GANGSTER."

That's not Lip.
If you spend the audition trying to convince us you're tough, you'll miss the character.
Remember:
LIP is trying to convince people he's tough.
That's different.
We should occasionally see the 15-year-old underneath the performance.
Especially when something catches him off guard.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE YOUNG

This is extremely important.
Lip wants to be treated like a man.
But he isn't one yet.
He's fifteen.
Let him make immature decisions.

Let him react emotionally.
Let him get embarrassed.
Let him become excited.
Let him say something stupid.
Let him occasionally be funny.
Let him be a kid.
Because when that kid is suddenly forced to deal with adult consequences—
the audience will feel it.

USE THE CONTRAST

The strongest Lip performance will give us both sides.

Outside:

"I'm good. I ain't scared of nobody."

At home:

"Ma, you take your medicine?"

That's Lip.

One world demands he become harder.

The other reminds us how young he actually is.

HIS ANGER

Lip has anger inside him.

But underneath much of that anger is something else.

Fear.

Fear of losing his mother.

Fear of looking weak.

Fear of being embarrassed.

Fear that nobody respects him.

Fear that he can't protect the person who protected him his entire life.

When Lip becomes angry, ask yourself:

What is he actually afraid of right now?

That will give the anger somewhere real to come from.

WHAT NOT TO DO

Don't force street slang or a tough-guy voice.

Don't make Lip angry in every scene.

Don't make him constantly sad because his mother is sick.

Don't turn him into comic relief.

Don't make him fearless.

And don't try to make him older than he is.

WE NEED TO SEE THE BOY INSIDE THE PERSONA.

That's where the character lives.

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

We're looking for a young actor with **natural presence and emotional honesty**. Someone who can be believable around older, dangerous characters without trying to overpower them.

Someone who can give us attitude one moment and vulnerability the next.

Someone who understands that a teenager trying not to cry can sometimes be more powerful than watching him cry.

We need to believe Lip loves his mother.

We need to believe he desperately wants respect.

And we need to believe that underneath everything he's pretending to be—

there is still a 15-year-old kid trying to figure out what being a man actually means.

THE HEART OF LIP

Lip thinks becoming a man means becoming harder.

Looking dangerous.

Never being afraid.

Never letting anyone disrespect him.

But life is about to teach him something very different.

Being a man isn't about pretending you don't have anything to lose.

It's about what you're willing to do for the people you can't afford to lose.

For Lip—

that's his mother.

That's Lip.

Now show us your version of him.