

Who is Phil?

PHIL

Age: 17 | Baltimore, Maryland

The Bully. The Show-Off. The Kid Who Uses Other People to Make Himself Feel Bigger.

UNDERSTANDING PHIL

Phil is the young man who bullies Lip at school.

On the surface, the relationship seems simple:

Phil sees someone smaller and vulnerable and decides to pick on him.

But for the actor, we want something more believable than a stereotypical school bully.

PHIL ENJOYS HAVING AN AUDIENCE.

He likes getting a reaction.

He likes making people laugh.

He likes knowing he can make another kid uncomfortable.

And Lip is an easy target—or at least Phil **thinks** he is.

What Phil doesn't understand is that Lip is carrying something much heavier than schoolyard embarrassment.

His mother is seriously ill.

The medication Lip is carrying matters.

So when Phil takes the bullying too far, he crosses a line he doesn't even realize exists.

WHO HE IS

Phil is 17.

That matters.

HE'S STILL A KID TOO.

Don't play him like a hardened criminal.

He's a teenager who has discovered that intimidation can create status.

He's learned that if other people are laughing **with** you, they're probably not laughing **at** you.

So Phil performs.

He jokes.

He embarrasses people.

He tests boundaries.

And when he senses weakness—

he pushes.

HIS PERSONALITY

Phil is **cocky, immature, confrontational, performative, sarcastic and hungry for attention.**

He enjoys controlling the energy around him.
But don't assume that means he's genuinely confident.
There's a difference between:

BEING CONFIDENT

and

NEEDING EVERYBODY TO THINK YOU'RE CONFIDENT.

Phil may live much closer to the second one.

The script doesn't give us enough to invent exactly why he behaves this way, so the actor shouldn't manufacture a tragic backstory.

Just understand:

People who constantly need to make someone else smaller usually need something from the reaction.

Find what Phil gets from it.

PHIL & LIP

Phil sees Lip as somebody he can mess with.

Lip's shoes give him an opening.

Phil makes fun of them, calling them:

"AIR ABRAHAMS."

It's funny to Phil.

Maybe it's funny to the people around them.

But Lip is already carrying enormous pressure from home.

Phil doesn't know that.

AND HE DOESN'T CARE ENOUGH TO ASK.

That's important.

Phil isn't walking into the scene thinking:

I'm going to destroy this kid emotionally.

He's thinking:

I'm having fun.

That makes what happens more believable.

DON'T PLAY "EVIL"

This is probably the biggest note for the actor.

PHIL DOESN'T THINK HE'S THE VILLAIN.

He's messing with Lip.

That's how he sees it.

He's clowning him.

Testing him.

Trying to make him react.

So don't come into the scene with a permanent angry face.

You can actually be having fun.

Laugh.

Smile.

Enjoy yourself.

THAT CAN MAKE THE BULLYING MORE UNCOMFORTABLE.

Because hurting Lip isn't emotionally difficult for Phil.

At least not yet.

THE FLINCH

Phil tries to make Lip flinch.

That's not about physically hurting him.

IT'S ABOUT CONTROL.

Can I make you jump?

Can I make you scared?

Can I show everybody watching that you're afraid of me?

That's the game.

So when you flinch Lip—

watch him.

You're looking for the reaction.

If he doesn't give you enough—

you escalate.

LIP'S SARCASM

Lip doesn't simply collapse.

He can respond sarcastically.

That matters.

PHIL DOESN'T LIKE LOSING CONTROL OF THE JOKE.

If everybody is supposed to be laughing at Lip and suddenly Lip makes Phil look foolish—

the temperature changes.

Now Phil needs to recover his status.

That's where the interaction can begin moving from:

joking

to

humiliation

to

physical confrontation.

For the actor:

LET THE EGO GET INVOLVED.

THE PILL BOTTLE

This is where everything changes.

Phil shoves Lip.

The bottle belonging to Lip's mother gets knocked away.

Eventually the medication ends up scattered.

To Phil—

it's a bottle.

To Lip—

IT'S HIS MOTHER.

That's the difference the actor needs to understand.

Lip says:

"Those were my mother's! She needs them."

Now suddenly Phil has information he didn't have before.

This wasn't just something Lip was carrying.

IT MATTERS.

DON'T GET SENTIMENTAL TOO QUICKLY

Phil doesn't necessarily become a different person the second he hears that.

Don't suddenly play:

Oh my God, what have I done?

unless the scene supports that reaction.

Teenagers sometimes realize they've crossed a line and still protect themselves with attitude.

Maybe Phil doubles down.

Maybe he doesn't know what to say.

Maybe he tries to act like it doesn't matter.

Maybe he sees how badly Lip is affected and, for just a second, something registers.

THE CAMERA CAN CATCH THAT SECOND.

You don't have to announce it.

WHAT PHIL DOESN'T KNOW

Phil doesn't know what Lip's morning looked like.

He doesn't know Lip was watching his mother struggle to eat.

He doesn't know Lip is worried she's getting worse.

He doesn't understand what those pills represent.

He doesn't know how helpless Lip already feels.

PHIL THINKS HE'S PICKING ON A KID WITH OLD SHOES.

But he's actually pushing on the deepest wound Lip has.

That's why the scene matters beyond a school fight.

PHIL'S ROLE IN LIP'S STORY

Phil helps push Lip toward Taron.

That's important.

Lip already feels powerless against his mother's illness.

He's broke.

He can't fix what's happening at home.

Then he goes outside and Phil makes him feel powerless there too.

EVERYWHERE LIP LOOKS, SOMEBODY OR SOMETHING IS REMINDING HIM THAT HE HAS NO POWER.

So after the confrontation, Lip begins moving toward a world where power appears to be available.

Tavon's world.
Phil doesn't know he's helping make that happen.
But dramatically—
HE IS.

FOR THE ACTOR

DON'T PLAY "BULLY."

Play a seventeen-year-old kid who enjoys having social power.
You're having fun.
You're showing off.
You're trying to get reactions.
You're testing Lip.
Then something happens that changes the temperature.
That's much more interesting than walking into the scene angry.

USE THE OTHER PEOPLE AROUND YOU

If people are watching, they matter.
Phil's behavior should change when there's an audience.
A joke becomes funnier when other people laugh.
A disrespect becomes harder to let go when other people saw it.
A comeback from Lip becomes more embarrassing if other people heard it.

PHIL'S EGO IS PUBLIC.

That can explain why something small escalates.
He's not only dealing with Lip.
He's protecting the version of Phil everyone else sees.

DON'T MAKE HIM TOO TOUGH

Phil is not Tavon.
He's not Shank.
He's not the Hitman.

HE'S SEVENTEEN.

That's essential.
He may imitate behavior he's seen.
He may believe he's harder than he actually is.
He may posture.
But there should still be youth underneath him.
That makes the character real.

PHYSICALITY

Phil should carry himself like someone comfortable taking up space around Lip.
Maybe he gets slightly too close.
Maybe he blocks Lip's path.
Maybe he invades his personal space because he knows Lip doesn't want the

confrontation.

But don't turn every movement into a threat.

CASUAL DISRESPECT IS MORE BELIEVABLE.

The feeling should be:

What are you going to do about it?

EMOTIONAL RANGE

Phil gives the actor more to play than it initially appears:

amusement → confidence → teasing → ego → irritation → embarrassment → aggression → surprise.

Potentially even a flash of realization when he understands what the pills meant.

The key is progression.

DON'T START WHERE THE SCENE ENDS.

WHAT NOT TO DO

Don't play a stereotypical bully.

Don't be angry from the beginning.

Don't force a street voice.

Don't constantly yell.

Don't play Phil like a grown gangster.

Don't make him evil.

Don't turn the shoe joke into a rehearsed comedy routine.

Don't make every movement aggressive.

Don't ignore the importance of having an audience.

And don't forget:

PHIL DOESN'T KNOW WHAT LIP IS GOING THROUGH.

That's what makes his cruelty hit harder.

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

We're looking for a young actor with **confidence, natural charisma, believable teenage energy and the ability to shift from playful teasing into something uncomfortable.**

Someone who understands that bullying isn't always performed with anger.

Sometimes it's performed with a smile.

We need an actor who can make Phil irritating without making him cartoonish.

Someone who can make us understand why Lip feels humiliated.

And someone capable of giving us one tiny moment—perhaps just through the eyes—where we wonder:

DID PHIL JUST REALIZE HE TOOK THIS TOO FAR?

We don't need an answer.

We just need the possibility.

THE HEART OF PHIL

Phil thinks he's making fun of a kid.

Old shoes.

A flinch.

A shove.

A laugh.

To Phil, it's another day.

TO LIP, IT ISN'T.

Those pills belong to the person Lip loves most in the world.

His mother is sick.

He can't fix her.

He can't afford to change their circumstances.

And now he can't even protect the medicine she needs.

Phil becomes one more reminder that Lip feels powerless.

And that moment helps send a fifteen-year-old boy looking for something he desperately believes he needs:

POWER.

Unfortunately, the man who appears to have it—
is Tavon.

Phil may never understand how important that encounter was.

But the audience will.

That's Phil.

Now show us your version of him.