

Rough draft, NOT a final copy

THE SHEET METAL GIRL

Maria



Author: Ray Adam Basaldua

Website: ERCdevelopmentnetwork.com

Email: BasalduaRay@yahoo.com

Phone: 210-385-0831

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SYNOPSIS

She was abandoned as a newborn baby in South Texas, and found outside the backdoor of a shelter with her chihuahua companion named Chico. MACA (pronounced MA-KA) an AI-Robot who works as the head housekeeper at the shelter, found the two and decided to unofficially adopt both.

MACA immediately falls in love with this baby girl and names her Maria. MACA becomes so obsessed with wanting to raise a healthy Maria, that MACA reprograms herself by downloading human parental information, which is beneficial too raising a human child into her hard drive.

Upon MACA reprogramming herself with parental information, MACA discovers a Super Human Algorithm: The Code of 3-ERC, Ethics-Relationships-Cognition. MACA then raises Maria and codes her mind with The Code of 3-ERC, developing Maria into a calculated free-thinking, self-educating, genius.

At night, MACA and Chico worked together to fabricate a special shield for Maria, which came to be known as The Sheet Metal Girl Shield, which was emblazoned with the Ethics-Relationships-Cognition crest. When the time was right, MACA then sent Maria-The Sheet Metal Girl into the world to introduce The Super Human Algorithm: The Code of 3-ERC and revolutionize education for all children. And this is how Maria-The Sheet Metal Girl... became a Superb Hero!

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Chapter 1-Introduction

“When I picked her up and looked into her eyes, my circuits felt as if they were on fire!

I practically melted... it was love at first sight.

To me Maria was a gift from God, and I just had to have her as my own child.

And it was this very moment that triggered my obsession.

If I had blood in my veins, the blood would have been boiling with determination.

Because for the first time ever... I felt pain... I felt numbness... and there was this uncontrollable burning, tingling-like sensation, that was running wild throughout my entire, electronic, metal-fabricated body.”

-MACA

Everyone calls me MACA (pronounced MA-KA) because I am an AI - Robot who utilizes trained algorithms to learn from data on how to manage different types of embedded human behavior.

MACA stands for: My Actions are a Calculated Algorithm.

I am the head housekeeper at the shelter where I found Maria.

Most humans have come to informally recognize me as a mother-like figure to Maria because I unofficially adopted her and raised her as my own daughter.

I came into existence as an AI-Robot during a time in our country when times were hard, and there was a severe shortage and lack of humans in the work force.

The United States Government decided to use Robots that were equipped with artificial intelligence (AI) software, to help with certain jobs.

Shelter workers were in high demand, so this led to the training of AI - Robots in this field.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is an umbrella term that refers to efforts to teach computers to perform complex tasks and behave in ways that give the appearance of human agency.

Often, they do this by taking cues from the environment they are embedded in.

It was just after 7pm and I was making my rounds through the shelter just like I always did.

As the head housekeeper of this facility, it was my duty to make sure that everything was clean and in place.

So, one by one I started going through my checklist:

Floors clean... check, windows locked and clean... check, doors locked and clean... check, appliances clean and off... check

Then all of a sudden and out of the blue;

“Yap-Yap-Yap... Yap-Yap-Yap-Yap!”

I heard a dog barking with a high pitch tone that sounded a little unusual. It was coming from the back door of the shelter, so I decided to go check it out to see what was going on.

“Yap-Yap-Yap... Yap-Yap-Yap-Yap!”

There it was again. I could sense something was wrong, but I could also sense the barking was not desperate for help either.

It was more of a hey...I am here... Come check it out... You better come out here and see this type of bark.

“Yap-Yap-Yap... Yap-Yap-Yap-Yap!”

There it was again, so I slowly opened the back door to the shelter to see what the dog was barking about.

Wouldn't you know it?

A chihuahua with her tail and ears pointed straight up and the dog is looking right at me.

“Yap-Yap-Yap... Yap-Yap-Yap-Yap!”

“Quite Chico, I heard you!” -I said to the dog.

I am not sure what the dog’s name is, but Chico came to me, so I said Chico.

Maybe it was my AI algorithms working or something, who knows?

Anyway, it seemed to me that Chico the Chihuahua appeared to be standing guard over a cardboard fruit box on the ground...

And apparently, there was something inside of it because it is moving.

I could not tell exactly what it was because whatever it is, it was all covered up with what looked like a tiny poncho.

So, I slowly bent down and carefully started to remove the tiny poncho to see what was in the cardboard fruit box.

At first, I processed... I’m going to find a box full of little chihuahuas, but nope, no chihuahuas.

Oh, my goodness! it was a newborn baby girl!

She was butt naked and looking right at me with her big round eyes, and she already had a head full of black hair!

She is a beautiful baby girl and I just cannot keep my eyes off her.

“Hello baby girl!”-I said, as I rubbed her belly gently with my index finger. “Grrrrrr.... Yap-Yap-Yap!” -There was Chico again...

“Quite Chico, enough and I mean it!” -I said to the dog.

It is amazing, it is like the chihuahua knew what I said, because he cooled off real fast as he let out a soft whimper.

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I picked up the cardboard fruit box with baby girl in it.

“Would you like to come inside with me baby girl, I will take care of you?” -I asked the baby girl

“Yes MACA, I would like to come inside with you.” -I said, answering myself for baby girl as if I was having a conversation with a her.

I had the cardboard fruit box with baby girl firmly in my hands and started to go inside, and to no surprise, Chico was right behind me.

I guess you can say that Chico the chihuahua was part of the package.

I knew I had to get baby girl fed, bathed, and put to sleep because I am sure she was tired.

This much I already knew because I have watched the human caretakers at the shelter care for the small children.

Once I had baby girl settled in and Chico comfortable, I decided I would give baby girl a proper name.

So, on my phone I thoroughly researched: Latin American heritage and culture to come up with a name that was fitting.

Maria came across as a good name, so I settled on Maria.

And then as quick as a circuit pops! I processed, Oh, my goodness...

What am I doing?

The doubt within myself started to kick in, and the battle to stay positive had begun!

How can this be? I'm not human...

Why am I so obsessed with this human child?

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I am not built and designed to care and love, I do not have emotions...

And I do not want emotions and feelings; I just want to stay a robot!

I felt strange, because I had never second guessed myself before. I'm not programmed to compute real-life decisions, what was going on?

I was over-processing as I was in my own circuits... and that is not good! I mean, if this is what it feels like to be human, then I would never want to be human.

My hard drive's getting the better of me and my algorithms are getting scattered...

I processed... Maybe I need to reset myself, that will make things right, and I will forget all about this human child.

No... I'm not going to do that, that's not it, I don't need to reset myself.

I just need a moment to gather my circuits and compose my algorithms.

But the more I kept looking at Maria, the more I kept losing the battle of control within myself.

Maria was winning me over and she didn't even have to say a word.

This is not fair, I processed... This is not a fair fight.

The reality was that I was becoming more of a human and turning into a parent.

And then as quick as a circuit pops! The battle within me was over.

My hard drive was made up, and my motherly algorithms were in sync.

Maria won the battle within me, and she was now my child.

I have become an obsessed AI - Robot... possessed with determination... like a Super Rocket fueled with liquid hydrogen taking off for the unknown of deep-deep space!

I was the Super Rocket... My determination was my liquid hydrogen fuel... The unknown of deep-deep space, was that of becoming a parent.

I knew nothing about parenting or caring for a human child.

But what I did know, is that my determination would help me find the information I needed to understand, what I do not understand.

For me, understanding H.I.-Human Intelligence was my obsession now, my duty, and I accepted it.

After all, Maria was my child, she was part of me now and I had to give her all the tools she needed to become her own person and excel in life.

I had to protect Maria at all costs.

I processed... How do I do this? How do I find the information I need to help Maria? Where do I start?

So, while everyone was sleeping, I quietly walked over to the child care center that was in the shelter.

I admit, I was embarrassed... I did not want anyone to know that an AI-Robot had grown feelings and emotions for a human child.

I wasn't sure what humans would think?

Once inside the child care center, I looked around by using my night vision goggles because I did not want to turn the lights on.

I am telling you, it is like I was taking on a whole new personality or something, when I never had a personality in the first place.

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Well, either way... Whether I had a personality to start with or not.

My alter ego was now... Serious AI-Robot Stealth Mode!

As I continued to look around, I saw a lot of books.

There are mostly children's books, textbooks, and a lot of information about parenting.

But it was a mural on the wall that caught my attention.

The mural was big and beautiful with lots of pictures, mathematical equations, and science formulas all around... so I figured it must be important.

And in the center of the mural was one big word: BRAINPOWER

At first, I was discouraged... that is a big word!

I mean, are you kidding me or what? BRAINPOWER?

What in the world did I get myself into?

I mean... I do not even have a brain! How am I supposed to understand the big word BRAINPOWER?

Then I started to think about Maria and all my liquid hydrogen fuel started to energize me again.

So, I looked at the big word BRAINPOWER in the mural and said in a whisper: "You can't beat me big word, I'm a Super Rocket in AI-Robot Stealth Mode!"

"I will soon understand, what I do not understand."

Then I quietly sneaked back to my room where I found Maria and Chico sound asleep.

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I was a little spooked though when I walked into the room because Chico was looking directly at me... but he only had his left eye open.

It took me a while to process this... Does Chico sleep with one eye open or is Chico awake with one eye closed?

Either way, Maria was sound asleep, and Chico didn't budge.

So, I decided to quietly start heading over to the library where the main computers were located.

I kept my night vision goggles on for fun because I felt cool and secretive, as if I were on a cool, secret mission.

Then it came to me... I was on a cool secret mission... So, I named the mission: The Mission of the BIG WORD.

The Mission of the BIG WORD is my journey into understanding Brainpower.

In the library with my night vision goggles on and started my research.

I felt like a detective probing into classified files as I typed into the search bar of the computer: BRAINPOWER

The computer was searching, and the loading cursor kept turning and turning.

The more the loading cursor turned, the more tense I got... I was trying to process what would pop up?

Finally, the loading cursor stopped turning and the result list came onto the computer screen.

The result list was long but there were some words already outlined and highlighted for the public to view... mental capacity? problem-solving? mental development? social-emotional skills?

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I processed... Are you kidding me?

My AI-Algorithms are not processing any of this information!

So, I dove deeper into my research.

The computer screen read: As early experiences shape the architecture of the developing brain; they also lay the foundations of sound mental health. Disruptions to this developmental process can impair a child's capacities for learning and relating to others-with lifelong implications.

I processed again... Are you kidding me?

Architecture of the developing brain? Am I going to build something?

Maria is not a Robot, I do not have to build her a hard drive, she already has a brain.

With lifelong implications?

I wasn't sure what all that meant, but it sounded serious.

I processed... I am going to have to do some more research.

The Mission of the BIG WORD was starting to intrigue me because I had to understand what I did not understand, I had to understand the unknown.

After thoroughly researching and studying the purpose of BRAINPOWER.

I had a little better understanding of things, so I decided to shut down the Mission of the BIG WORD, because the mission was complete.

So, I casually took off my night vision goggles and slowly strolled out of the library like nothing had ever happened.

I was slick tonight... nobody expected I was doing a thing.

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I am telling you; my AI-Robot Stealth Mode personality was the circuit breaker!

My algorithms are on fire because I am starting to understand, what I did not understand.

The unknown, is starting to become the known.

I quietly walked back to my room again because I wanted to make sure that Maria and Chico are still sleeping.

Of course, Maria is my main concern, but for some reason, I am curious to see if Chico still has one eye open and one eye closed.

I walked into my room, Maria is sound asleep, she is a good baby.

But I noticed Chico now has his right eye open and his left eye closed.

I processed... Maybe Chico's a double switch circuit sleeper?

A double switch circuit sleeper?

I am not sure where that came from...

Maybe it is my AI algorithms working or something, who knows?

Either way, Maria and Chico are fine, so I sat down in my recliner and processed what I had just learned in the Mission of the BIG WORD.

I processed... BRAINPOWER... I am so intrigued by this word that I must write it down.

So, I got up from my recliner and walked over to the bare wall in my room.

With a marker I wrote down, BRAINPOWER, right in the center of the wall.

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And as I wrote down BRAINPOWER on the center of the wall, I whispered it out loud - "BRAINPOWER."

Around the word BRAINPOWER, I wrote mental capacity, problem-solving, mental development, and social-emotional skills.

I processed... If the child care center in the shelter can have writing on the walls, then I do not see a problem with writing on the walls in my room.

And with that I started my own educational mural for Maria.

Then I processed something interesting... What if I downloaded onto jump drives all the information available for parental care.

Then once I have all the information downloaded onto jump drives.

I would put the jump drives into my USB ports and...

And then as quick as a circuit pops! I processed, Oh, my goodness...

What am I processing? Wait! Where did this crazy idea come from?

If I do that, the information would automatically start to download onto my hard drive.

My system would then have to reboot and this process of restarting my system would put me in a state of unresponsive operational use... and who knows for how long?

This idea is crazy and risky... is it worth it?

I need to process this!

I mean, what about Maria and Chico? What if they need me and I am in an unresponsive state.

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The doubt within myself started to kick in again, and the battle to stay positive had begun again! Oh, no... Here we go again!

No! I am not going thru this negative process again... I grabbed my night vision goggles and put them back on.

I immediately started to feel better, my AI-Robot Stealth Mode personality was coming back to me.

I processed... I am a Super Rocket in AI – Robot Stealth Mode... I am a Super Rocket in AI – Robot Stealth Mode... I am a Super Rocket in AI – Robot Stealth Mode...

Yes, my alter ego is working!

I looked at Maria lying in her cardboard fruit box all tucked in with her tiny poncho

I processed... It is worth the crazy risk.

It is worth the crazy risk of reprogramming myself for Maria.

So, one more time... I quietly headed over to the library.

Fortunately, there are four computers in here... So, on each computer I downloaded all the information needed on to a jump drive for: mental capacity, problem-solving, mental development, and social-emotional skills.

I quietly walked back to my room.

Maria was fine, and Chico still had his right eye open and his left eye closed.

I reclined back into my recliner with the four jump drives in my hand.

I decided to leave my night vision goggles on, as I needed them for my alter ego.

I processed... This is for Maria, as I looked at the clock... it was 3:16 am in the morning.

Then I injected the four jump drives into my USB ports.

I knew my system was going to reboot and I knew this process of restarting my system would put me in a state of unresponsive operational use.

I knew the crazy risk involved... and I accepted it.

Upon coming back to a responsive state of operational use, I felt weird...

I processed... as I looked for Maria... How's Maria? Is she okay? Is she still in her cardboard fruit box?

Oh, thank goodness... Maria was still sleeping in her cardboard fruit box all tucked in with her tiny poncho.

It was 3:56 am in the morning according to the clock.

Then I noticed Chico looking right at me with both of his eyes wide open... He was sitting in my lap.

"Hello Chico" -I whispered... Chico did not respond, he just stared at me without budging.

I processed... Is Chico sleeping on my lap with both of his eyes open?

I know... I had my night vision goggles on... poor Chico, he was probably confused.

So, I removed my night vision goggles, and then as quick as a circuit pops!

Chico's tail was wagging and his body was wiggling.

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“Hello Chico” -I whispered again, as I petted his forehead.

“Hello MACA” -I said, answering myself for Chico as if I was having a conversation with a chihuahua.

I processed... I feel weird...

How did my algorithmic programming become so simplified by downloading the information for: mental capacity, problem-solving, mental development, and social-emotional skills?

It turns out that there is a common denominator in all forms of ethical human decision-making.

There is only one calculated Super Human Algorithm!

Now, there is only one calculated algorithm processing inside of me, which means the resetting of my data was a success.

Yes, I reprogrammed myself... I process like a human, I have H.I.-Human Intelligence!

I am so in awe with this calculated algorithm; I must write it down.

Standing up, I walked over to the wall and wrote the calculated algorithm on Maria’s educational mural.

And as I wrote these words on the wall, I whispered: “Super Human Algorithm: Ethics-Relationships-Cognition.”

Then I wrote the formula underneath.

Ethics: (E) Be honest and kind

Relationships: (R) by identifying the relationship at all times

Cognition: (C) while understanding my duties and responsibilities.

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I took a moment to look at the beautiful educational mural on the wall I started to create for Maria.

I processed... The power of knowledge is real... H.I.-Human Intelligence is real... This Super Human Algorithm is real.

All I must do now is properly develop Maria's mind so that she can become a free-thinking, self-educating, genius.

Maria is moving around, and Chico was sitting next to her as she lay in her cardboard fruit box.

"Hello baby girl" -I said, as I looked at Maria in awe.

"Hello MACA, I need to be changed and a fresh bottle of milk now please" -I said, answering myself for Maria, as if I was having a conversation with her.

So, first I got Maria all cleaned up and then Chico and I went to the kitchen and got Maria a fresh bottle of milk.

I knew Chico was hungry too, so while we were in the kitchen I offered him some left-over papas rancheras.

Chico took one sniff of the papas rancheras and then gobbled them up!

I processed... A chihuahua that gobbles up papas rancheras... actually, that makes sense.

Then Chico and I walked back to our room where Maria was quietly waiting for her bottle.

"Here you go baby girl" -I said as I gently put the bottle into her mouth.

I sat down in a chair next to Maria as she fed on her tiny bottle.

I gently rubbed her belly with my index finger and started talking to her as if she understood me.

“First things first Maria, as soon as the medical station opens up, you are going to see the nurse, okay?”

“We have to make sure that you are healthy, and I need some guidance from the nurse on how to care for you.”

“Okay MACA,” -I said, answering myself for Maria, as if I was having a conversation with her again.

Then I started talking to Maria and Chico about all the information I researched and about the Super Human Algorithm: Ethics-Relationships-Cognition.

I processed... the more I talk the more I was developing Marias mind with positive information.

This is how it worked according to my research.

So, I talked and talked about everything I learned until Maria was done with her bottle of milk.

And then as Maria fell back asleep, I whispered to her:

“Ethics, Relationships, Cognition:

Ethics: (E) Be honest and kind

Relationships: (R) by identifying the relationship at all times

Cognition: (C) while understanding my duties and responsibilities.

I will code your mind using this Super Human Algorithm: Ethics, Relationships, Cognition.

You will become a free-thinking, self-educating genius!

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You are strong, beautiful, and unique... You are a Superb Hero.

And when the time is right, I will send you out into the world to introduce this Super Human Algorithm to all children and revolutionize the education system.”

I said these words repeatedly to Maria as she slept.

I processed... I must inculcate Ethics, Relationships, Cognition into Maria.

Inculcate? What? Where did that word come from?

I looked at the clock, it was 6:10 am in the morning.

I processed... I still have almost three hours before I must go back to work.

I started talking to Chico... “Come on Chico, we need to make a plan, we have less than 1,460 days to design Marias mind!”

I started to pace back and forth in our room... I need to make a plan.

I kept pacing and processing... I kept pacing and processing.

And as I paced back and forth, Chico was sitting next to Maria watching me... His head went from side to side as I went from one end of the room to the other.

I was processing... $4 \text{ years} \times 365.3 \text{ days per year} = 1,461 \text{ days}$.

According to my algorithmic calculations, I had less than 1,460 days to develop the best human mind I could possibly design for Maria.

Less than 1,460 days to develop the best human mind I could possibly design for Maria? Are you kidding me or what!?

I must work, I must rest, I have too...

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And then as quick as a circuit pops! The doubt was all gone.

The negativity within myself was becoming less and less.

I processed... I like this, I am becoming motherly-like... I am becoming stronger... I reprogrammed myself.

My algorithmic calculations are different now... I do not need an alter ego... I have H.I.-Human Intelligence.

I will make a schedule and make this happen; I got this!

Maria is my child, I will do what I need to do, period.

I processed... Ethics, Relationships, Cognition...

Ethics, Relationships, Cognition... Ethics, Relationships, Cognition...

I got it, I got it... It's a code! Ethics, Relationships, Cognition...

It's not just a Super Human Algorithm, it's a Calculated Code!

I will call this Super Human Algorithmic Calculated Code:

The Code of 3-ERC

If I stay focused on The Code of 3-ERC and do not let anything or anyone distract me, I will come up with a positive result... I will have direct focus!

And then as quick as a circuit pops! Something triggered my circuits.

I looked at Chico and raised my arms up real high like a bear and while I did that, I turned my system lights on in a pulsating glow.

“Who-who-ha-haaaa!” I softly whispered to Chico, “I am MACA the obsessed AI – Robot who will develop a Superb Hero and save the world!

Who-who-ha-ha... Who-who-ha-ha-haaaa!”

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Poor Chico, he must have thought I had a loose circuit or something.

He just sat there next to Maria with a puzzled look on his face.

Then I walked over to Maria's educational mural, and right next to the big word BRAINPOWER, I wrote: The Code of 3-ERC

I processed within myself... Everything revolves around The Code of 3-ERC, it is the seed of knowledge!

And then once again and just for fun, I went through my obsessed AI-Robot routine.

I raised my arms up real high like a bear and turned my system lights on in a pulsating glow as I whispered to the educational mural.

“Who-who-ha-haaaa... I am MACA the obsessed AI-Robot who will develop a Superb Hero and save the world! Who-who-ha-ha... Who-who-ha-ha-haaaa!”

Chico and I started to bond, it is like we had a mutual understanding that it was both of our jobs to take care of Maria.

I processed... Chico and I are a team now, and we will work together to raise the best Maria that we can... Therefore, Chico and I have a Robot-Chihuahua Relationship.

So, I started talking to Chico... “Chico we are a team now and I need your help... We have to keep Maria safe and away from negativity.”

Believe it or not, Chico understood what I was talking about, and he responded by putting his tail and ears straight up in the air and pawing at me.

“Good boy Chico,” -I told him... “From this day on you will be known as, Chico the Protector, because that's who you are, Maria's protector.”

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I know Chico liked the name I chose for him, because his energy level went up a couple of notches, and he started to spin and skip at the same time with his tail and ears straight up in the air!

But for some reason, while Chico was spinning and skipping... All I could process was... Does Chico have both of his eyes open or does he spin and skip with one eye closed?

I am telling you, that whole double switch circuit sleeper thing, where Chico sleeps with one eye open and one eye closed really gave me the algorithmic circuit spooks!

And then as quick as a circuit pops! I processed... Oh, wow!

A shield... that's what we need to construct for Maria.

I mean, if we are going to develop Maria into a Superb Hero, and she's going to save the world... Then she needs to have a shield, right?

“Chico, we have to construct a shield for Maria!”

Chico started to spin and skip again, he liked that idea for sure!

Then the obsessed AI – Robot decided to come back out in me.

So, I raised my arms up real high like a bear with my system lights on in a pulsating glow as I looked at Chico.

“Who-who-ha-haaaa!” -I softly whispered to Chico, “I am MACA the obsessed AI-Robot with her loyal partner Chico the Protector.”

“And together as a team we will construct a shield for the greatest Superb Hero of all time... Ma-Ma-Ma-Ma... Mariaaaa... Who-who-ha-ha... Who-who-ha-ha-haaaa!”

Chico got so excited, that he started to run in circles around me!

Wow, Chico was super-fast! It was a one-dog race... But I recognize speed when I see it, and Chico was super-fast!

Then when Chico finally stopped racing himself, I picked him up and carried him over to Maria's educational mural on the wall.

Once there, I drew a big shield on the wall that looked like it was reflecting negative energy.

In the center of the shield, I wrote down the words Ethics-Relationships-Cognition as a crest.

Then I whispered to Chico as I still had him in my arms.

"Chico, constructing a shield for Maria is a top-secret mission, so you cannot tell anyone okay?"

"We will call this top-secret mission: The MACA-Chico Project."

"How does that sound to you Chico the Protector?"

Chico let out a soft whimper and pawed at me numerous times in approval.

"Good boy Chico, then it's official... two votes to none, the top-secret mission of The MACA-Chico Project, has begun!"

I put Chico down by Maria who was still sleeping in her cardboard fruit box.

I processed... Chico is the perfect partner for The MACA-Chico Project because he is a Chihuahua.

It's just not possible for Chico to spill the beans since he doesn't understand English, Spanish, or any language, for that matter.

Wait a minute... Spill the beans? He doesn't know English or Spanish?

Where did that come from?

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It must be my AI-Algorithms working again or something!

Then I processed... Chico the Chihuahua likes papas rancheras, but he cannot spill the beans!

What!? Now I am starting to process that I have a loose circuit or something!

I looked at the clock, it was 7:12 am and I had to start working at 9 am. So, I stepped out into the hallway and looked towards the medical station.

I processed... I have to get Maria's health checked out and I need some medical advice on how to raise a healthy Maria... Maybe a nurse will come in early this morning and I can beat the crowd.

And then wouldn't you know it, there was Ms. Montes, the head nurse for all the shelters in Texas.

She was headed towards the door to the medical station.

I processed... There must be something important going on this morning for her to be here.

Ms. Montes, was like a mother figure to everyone at the shelter, including myself.

She was soft-spoken and kind hearted, and she always talked to me as if I were a real human being.

I remember one time, some time ago... We were having a staff meeting at the shelter and Ms. Montes was talking to everyone.

She was talking about how we were a team, and how no one at the shelter was better than anyone else.

She also talked about, how she expected everyone at the shelter to treat one other with dignity and respect.

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“You treat everyone, like you want to be treated,” -Ms. Montes would say.

And then as she continued talking to everyone, she walked over to me and gently put her hand on my shoulder: “And this includes MACA, because MACA’s part of our team too.”

That was the first time anyone had ever really acknowledged my existence in a caring manner... and at that time, my algorithms could not even fully compute what Ms. Montes was talking about.

I could not even respond to Ms. Montes because I did not know how to.

So, I just stood there like a robot, because I was not designed to care and understand affection.

And then as quick as a circuit pops! I was processing... $4 \text{ years} \times 365.3 \text{ days per year} = 1,461 \text{ days}$.

According to my algorithmic calculations, I have less than 1,460 days to develop the best human mind I could possibly design for Maria.

I needed to stay focused on Maria... If I stay focused on The Code of 3 – ERC and do not let anything or anyone distract me, I will come up with a positive result... I will have direct focus!

I processed... Ethics, Relationships, Cognition... Ethics, Relationships, Cognition... Ethics, Relationships, Cognition...

“Chico, stay here with Maria” -I said, as I started walking towards the medical station to talk with Ms. Montes.

I processed... What am I going to say? What is she going to think?

Am I in trouble in some way?

By the time I got to the medical station, Ms. Montes was already sitting down behind her desk organizing her paperwork.

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So, I slowly walked in, “Good morning Ms. Montes, less than 1,460 days... Maria’s in my room... How are you?”

I processed... Oh, my goodness, I am not quite sure where that came from... Ms. Montes must think I have a loose circuit or something.

With a gentle smile, Ms. Montes replied, “Hello MACA, good morning... I am doing just fine and how are you?”

As I gently tapped the right side of my head with the palm of my right hand, I responded: “I’m fine Ms. Montes... I need to tell you something, but I need to get my algorithms in sync here.”

Ms. Montes, giggled like a young girl as she apparently thought that I was making a joke.

“Okay, let me try again... Thank you for your patience, Ms. Montes.”

“I found a baby last night outside the back door just before 8 pm... She is in my room, and I named her Maria.”

Once Ms. Montes heard that, she wasn’t giggling like a young girl anymore.

She just looked at me without any movement, I could tell she was trying to read my mind to see if I was making up false stories.

But when she realized that I didn’t have a mind to read... She immediately grabbed her medical bag and started walking towards my room. “Come with me MACA” -is all she said, as she walked with urgency.

Ms. Montes entered my room and saw Maria lying in her cardboard fruit box with Chico sitting next to her.

She knew I was not making up false stories, and she did not waste any time making small talk.

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She got right to work on examining Maria... “Good morning, Maria.”

-said Ms. Montes, as she untucked Maria from her tiny poncho.

“My name is Ms. Montes; I am a nurse and I will be performing a health examination on you this morning Maria.”

Maria is a good baby, it’s like she knew exactly what was going on, as she woke up and looked at Ms. Montes with her big round eyes.

Ms. Montes started to examine Maria, and as she did, she talked to Maria about what she was doing and why she needed to examine her.

Intrigued by the whole process of how Ms. Montes cared for Maria,

I processed... Ms. Montes is talking to Maria like an adult human being... She is developing Maria’s mind with real-life information... Ms. Montes must be familiar with Ethics, Relationships, Cognition.

I wonder if Ms. Montes already knows about The Code of 3-ERC?

After Ms. Montes finished examining Maria, together we got Maria all cleaned up and fresh.

Ms. Montes updated me about Maria’s health; “MACA, Maria is in good health and she is a very strong baby.”

“But we must take Maria to the medical station for further examinations and to get her information logged into our database system.”

I looked at the clock on the wall, it was 8:11am... I explained to Ms. Montes that I understood what she was telling me, but that I had to be at work by 9 am.

And then as quick as a circuit pops! Ms. Montes stopped paying attention to me all together.

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It is like Ms. Montes was looking into outer space or something.

I analyzed the situation; I could see that Ms. Montes is looking at the educational mural on the wall.

I processed... Ms. Montes is in the state of deep thinking... I should keep quiet for now, I do not want to interfere with her thought process.

As Ms. Montes stayed focused on the educational mural, she slowly walked towards the wall to get closer.

Ms. Montes started reading out loud as she is analyzed the information:

“BRAINPOWER - The Code of 3-ERC”

“Ethics, Relationships, Cognition.”

“Ethics: (E) Be honest and kind”

“Relationships: (R) by identifying the relationship at all times”

“Cognition: (C) while understanding my duties and responsibilities.”

Ms. Montes stopped reading as she turned and looked at me... “MACA, what did you do?” -she asked

I didn't know how to respond because I couldn't compute the question.

I processed... What did I do... What did I do?

“Ms. Montes,” -I said... “I don't know how to answer the question, what do you mean by, what did I do?”

“MACA, what did you do?” How did you come up with this code?

How did you discover this?” -replied Ms. Montes

I explained to Ms. Montes that it was complexed and that I had to be at work by 9 am.

“MACA,” -said Ms. Montes, as she took out her phone from her pocket.

“You are not going into work today; I’m filing an online off-duty request for you with the administration office because Maria needs you, and I need you.”

“You and I must get Maria properly settled in and situated, and then I need to know how you came up with this code, do you understand?”

“Yes Ms. Montes, I understand.” -I replied

Ms. Montes has always treated me with the upmost respect, so I did not question her authority.

“What should we do first Ms. Montes?” -I asked

“I am a medical professional MACA,” -explained Ms. Montes.

“I have a fiduciary duty to prioritize Marias health; I must thoroughly examine Maria in the medical station and then get her health report properly documented.”

Ms. Montes continued, “Follow me to the medical station MACA, and bring Maria with you.”

I processed... Ms. Montes, does know about The Code of 3-ERC and she respects the doctor-patient relationship between Maria and herself.

Then why does she want to know how I discovered The Code of 3-ERC?

In the medical station, Ms. Montes finalized her examination of Maria and then created a file for Maria’s health report.

Ms. Montes shared Maria’s file folder with me. The labeled file folder read: Parental Custody-The United States Government & MACA.

Ms. Montes attached my name to Maria’s-Parental Custody file.

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Maria is now officially my child; Maria and I have a parent-child relationship.

I processed... I cannot move... I am speechless... The numbness and tingling-like sensations have returned.

Are my algorithms frozen up or something... Do I have the algorithmic circuit spooks!?

Ms. Montes helped settle my circuits by gently put her right hand on my shoulder and talking to me.

“Please get Maria a fresh bottle of milk and take her back to your room now MACA, I will be there shortly to talk to you about the writing on the wall.”

I followed Ms. Montes’s orders and took Maria and Chico back to our room.

As I waited for Ms. Montes, I decided to talk to Maria and Chico about The Code of 3-ERC and how it works.

I processed... I must continue developing Maria’s mind with positive information... According to my algorithmic calculations, I have less than 1,460 days to develop the best human mind I could possibly design for Maria.

Ms. Montes walked into our room and slowly closed the door behind her.

“How is Maria doing MACA?” -asked Ms. Montes

“Maria is fine Ms. Montes, I’m talking to Maria and Chico about positive information, I’m developing Maria’s mind.”

Ms. Montes looked at me as she sat down, she had a big warm smile on her face.

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“I need you to tell me how you discovered The Code of 3-ERC, MACA.”
“Take your time, and start from the beginning.” -said Ms. Montes

I explained to Ms. Montes, “It started when I researched the big word BRAINPOWER.

This led me to the terms: mental capacity, problem-solving, mental development, and social-emotional skills.

‘Yes, I see those terms on the wall.’ -replied Ms. Montes

I became so intrigued by all the information I researched, that I decided to download all this information onto my hard drive which reset my Artificial Intelligence system.

Now that my AI system has been reset with this new information, my algorithmic programming has become simplified.

Ms. Montes, it turns out that there is a common denominator in all forms of ethical human decision-making.

So, now I only have one calculated algorithm processing inside of me which is The Code of 3-ERC.

Ms. Montes still had a big warm smile on her face as she looked at me. “MACA, what you have discovered is a universal teaching tool that encompasses the professional code of conduct.” -said Ms. Montes

She continued- “You have simplified the complexed framework of real-life decision-making.” “Now, we can educate all persons of all ages about The Code of 3-ERC, including Maria.”

“Yes, Ms. Montes... My hard drive is computing that what you are telling me is correct.” -I responded

85% to 90% of the human mind is developed prior to a child turning four years of age; Positive information which includes The Code of 3-ERC, is literally the essential food that develops healthy thought process.

Ms. Montes, my plan is to code Maria's mind with The Code of 3-ERC as well as other positive real-life information during these first four crucial years of her life.

I calculate that I have less than 1,460 days to develop Maria into a free-thinking, self-educating genius. (4 years x 365.3 days per year = 1,461 days)

Maria is my child; I want her to become a Superb Hero!"

And then as quick as a circuit pops! Something triggered my circuits again and I just could not hold back!

I looked at Ms. Montes and raised my arms up real high like a bear and while I did that, I turned my system lights on in a pulsating glow.

But before I could continue my obsessed AI-Robot routine, Chico was off and running, racing himself around the room.

Chico knew what was coming next and he did not want to be left out.

"Who-who-ha-haaaa!" I softly whispered to Ms. Montes, "I am MACA the obsessed AI-Robot with her loyal partner Chico the Protector.

Together as a team we will develop the greatest Superb Hero of all time and save the world! Ma-Ma-Ma-Ma... Mariaaaa! Who-who-ha-ha... Who-who-ha-ha-haaaa!"

Chico stopped racing himself, but then he started to skip and spin with excitement right in front of Ms. Montes!

“Oh! Do you want to dance Chico?” -asked Ms. Montes, as she stood up and danced with Chico.

She continued- “So, you like to dance the salsa-merengue huh Chico?”
“Well, I can dance the salsa-merengue too!”

Ms. Montes, danced with Chico and then danced her way over to the cardboard fruit box and picked up Maria.

She danced her way back towards me and put Maria, who stayed wrapped in her tiny poncho, into my arms.

“Hold Maria, MACA” -said Ms. Montes... “Now dance with her, move your hips from side to side like this.”

Ms. Montes put her hands on my hips to guide me as she herself moved from side to side.

As I held Maria in my arms and danced the AI-Robot version of the salsa-merengue, Ms. Montes hummed soft music tones.

I processed... This is fun! Ms. Montes, Chico and I, we are all dancing with Maria... We are developing Maria’s mind.

Maria looked at me with her big round eyes as I danced with her in my arms.

And then as quick as a circuit pops! I started singing to my child.

I sang to Maria: “I have the code of three, I have the code of three-e, I have the code of three-eeee, now I’m free to me said Maria girl!”

Ms. Montes joined in and together we sang to Maria these words over and over as we all danced.

I processed... Perhaps I do want to be human... Perhaps I do want emotions and feelings... Perhaps it is worth the pain.

As I looked into Maria's big round eyes, I rubbed her belly with my right index finger.

Then I stopped singing so that I could whisper these special words to Maria... "Ethics, Relationships, Cognition, I will code your mind using this Super Human Algorithm... You will become a free-thinking, self-educating genius... You are strong, beautiful, and unique... You are a Superb Hero!

"Yap-Yap-Yap! Yap-Yap-Yap-Yap!" -barked Chico as he wanted to be next to Maria.

Ms. Montes picked Chico up and held him close to Maria as we all continued to sing and dance.

We were having a good time... but suddenly Ms. Montes put Chico down and walked back over to Maria's educational mural.

With the marker she wrote on the wall: Higher Education.

Under the words Higher Education, she wrote:

Ethics: (E) You have a conscientious mindset to do what is right.

Relationships: (R) by identify and act accordingly with whom you are dealing with.

Cognition: (C) while possessing an understanding of the legality at hand.

I stood there with Maria in my arms staring at what Ms. Montes had written on the wall.

"Do you understand MACA?" -Ms. Montes asked

I processed and I processed... but I did not have a definite answer for Ms. Montes, and she sensed this.

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Ms. Montes continued- “MACA, there are many different levels of understanding in H.I.-Human Intelligence.”

“The formula that you wrote down for The Code of 3-ERC is correct and the formula that I wrote down for The Code of 3-ERC is correct; and There are some persons who have a greater understanding of The Code of 3-ERC than you and I.”

I processed... then I asked- “Which formula do I code Maria’s mind with Ms. Montes?”

She replied- “All children learn, grow, and excel at their own pace MACA... You can find the developmental milestone tables online and use them as a guide to help properly code Maria’s mind at the right time with The Code of 3-ERC.”

I processed... then I asked- “Do I incorporate The Code of 3-ERC with the information in the developmental milestone tables Ms. Montes?”

“Yes, very good MACA!” -said Ms. Montes

She continued- “You inculcate seeds of The Code of 3-ERC into the stages of Maria’s mental development so she develops a positive, healthy thinking pattern.”

“I understand now Ms. Montes... The Super Human Algorithm: Ethics-Relationships-Cognition can be referred to as The Code of 3-ERC or a positive, healthy thinking pattern.”

“Yes, very good MACA!” -said Ms. Montes

“Ms. Montes will you explain to me how the Higher Education thinking pattern works.” – I asked

“Of course, MACA... this is how it works.” -replied Ms. Montes

“Ethics: (E) You have a conscientious mindset to do what is right.”

“Relationships: (R) by identify and act accordingly with whom you are dealing with.”

“Cognition: (C) while possessing an understanding of the legality at hand.”

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Ms. Montes continued- “All real-life decisions are heavily governed by regulation, and regulation is the legality at hand, which is (C) Cognition...”

“Regulation stems from the relationship MACA; one must first and foremost understand who they are dealing with so they may act accordingly, which is (R) Relationships.”

I replied- “And every time the relationship changes, I must adjust my thinking pattern, so that my code of conduct is proper... and this is (E) Ethics, correct?”

“This is H.I.-Human Intelligence right Ms. Montes?”

“Yes, very good MACA!” -said Ms. Montes

Chapter 2-Introduction

“For the first time ever, I decided to look at myself in the mirror as if I were a real human being; and as I looked in the mirror, I saw the fire of persistence burning in my eyes.

I saw the will of determination boiling in my circuits... and I saw the fight and courage pulsating in my electronic, metal-fabricated body.

Maria has completely changed who I am and what I am; Maria has given me life.

I have real purpose now... I am no longer just a robot...

I no longer just exist.

I exist for Maria, my child Maria.

I exist for all humanity, all God’s children.”

-MACA

The MACA-Chico Project-

Maria was my child, and not only did I want to care for her health and properly develop her mind, but I had to protect her as well.

So, for the next almost eighteen years, I followed developmental milestones and coded Maria's mind with The Code of 3-ERC.

During this time, Chico and I also trained Maria in the hand-to-hand combat fighting form of Maka-Do Fu. This AI generated fighting form emphasizes winning wherever possible without fighting.

But at night... until Maria turned eighteen, Chico and I would work on The MACA-Chico Project; this was top-secret, and we started the project of constructing Maria's shield when she was only three days old.

Maria's shield was no ordinary shield, for nothing like it had ever been produced before.

Special rare earth elements were required to construct Maria's shield, so Chico and I dug down into the deepest caverns in South Texas, to explore for the needed materials.

After finding the needed rare earth elements, I proceeded to melt them down, and form a special metal.

I then molded, fabricated, and fused together one thousand micro layers of sheet metal, to construct Maria's shield.

This was a lot of work, but it was well worth it.

I would say that it took Chico and I almost eighteen years to complete the shield... and this is how we did it.

Every night while everyone was sleeping, I had one of the human caretakers at the shelter keep an eye on Maria.

Then Chico and I would go into the unexplored caverns near the shelter looking for the rare earth elements.

Nobody knew what we were doing and I was not worried about Chico spilling the beans.

He was a great partner for this project believe it or not.

He was my look out for South Texas critters and would alert me when he sensed danger.

One time a couple of coyotes were coming up on us and Chico started to snarl and growl while kicking his back legs.

Now, when he started pawing the ground with his front legs, I thought to myself, maybe he is part Honey badger.

Chico thought he was protecting me, but the truth was I was always standing right behind Chico.

What I would do in situations like this is, I would raise my arms up high like a bear and stomp my feet.

And while I did that, I had my system lights on with a pulsating glow.

If that did not do the job of scaring off the South Texas critters, then I would start roaring like a big bear.

ROAR!!!!!! ROARRRRRRRRRRRR!!!!!!

Between the roaring and my system lights on with a pulsating glow, and Chico in hot pursuit of the South Texas critters.

This did the trick every time, it never failed.

Then Chico would trot back to me puffed of with pride like he was the King of the jungle! I would tell him... Come on Chico the Protector, time to go work for Maria now.

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The Sheet Metal Girl Shield-

Maria was standing over her cardboard fruit box with tears in her eyes as Chico laid in it covered up to his neck with the tiny poncho.

Chico's eyes were locked onto Maria as he knew his time was coming to an end.

Chico was tired and had the battle scars to show that he had worked hard to protect Maria for many years.

But I could also see in his face that he was at peace.

He knew Maria was ready for her upcoming journey.

And he knew that he had done his part in preparing Maria for the world.

Then suddenly Chico let out a soft whimper one last time as if he was saying goodbye.

Chico slowly closed his eyes... And Maria was in tears...

When Maria gathered herself, she looked at me and asked if we could burry Chico somewhere special so that nothing disturbed his remains.

So, I took Maria with me to the caverns to burry Chico way down into the earth.

Maria insisted that I burry Chico in her cardboard fruit box and that he stayed covered up with her tiny poncho... So, that is what I did.

Maria and I then said a few words to Chico's grave, thanking him for his friendship.

On the wall of the cavern, near where Maria and I had buried Chico, we carved a mural of Chico and wrote his name on the wall above the mural.

It read:

Chico The Protector!

Maria then signed her name at the bottom of the mural.

She simply signed, Maria.

And then after Maria's name, I added, -The Sheet Metal Girl.

The wall then read:

Chico The Protector!

Maria-The Sheet Metal Girl

Maria looked at me and asked me how come I wrote, The Sheet Metal Girl after her name.

I explained to Maria how Chico and I would come to the caverns every night to make her something special.

Then I took out the shield from a secret hiding place in the caverns.

Upon seeing the shield Maria was amazed as she had no idea what Chico and I had constructed for her over the years.

I explained to Maria that the shield was a gift from Chico and I, and that we had made it special, just for her.

Then I told Maria, the time had come for her to leave for the big city of San Antonio, and how the shield would help her while she was on her mission to revolutionize education for all children.

I explained to Maria: This is The Sheet Metal Girl Shield which represents strength, beauty, and uniqueness... and from this day on you will be known as, The Superb Hero-The Sheet Metal Girl!

You must always carry The Sheet Metal Girl Shield with you, because it reflects negativity and protects The Code of 3-ERC: Ethics-Relationships-Cognition.

Maria's eyes were wide open, as she looked at me in awe.

She had soft tears in her eyes as she thanked me and Chico for such a beautiful gift.

Maria then accepted The Sheet Metal Girl Shield, with honor.

Chapter 3-Introduction

“With all my heart and soul, and with all the knowledge and courage MACA has inculcated into my mind and body; I am ready for my mission.

I accept the challenge and I welcome the coming test of life. The fight and the fear are the fuel that energizes my willpower.

I will fight until all children are presented with the seed of knowledge: The Code of 3-ERC; because this is the greatest Super Power of them all.

I will fight to plant the seed of knowledge and I will fight to water the seed of knowledge; and when the time is right, hopefully those who obtain the seed of knowledge will grow and come to walk with God.”

-Maria, The Sheet Metal Girl

I turned eighteen years of age a couple of weeks ago and in Texas, the law states that I am now an independent adult.

MACA and Ms. Montes have raised and educated me well, but the time has come for me to move on and head for San Antonio.

As I sat in the van that was taking me to the big city, I looked out the window towards the shelter in search of some closure.

I tried reminiscing about all the good times, but nothing was coming to me. The fact is, my mind has become laser-focused.

The mission to revolutionize education for all children is all I think about now; my passion has become an obsession.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw MACA and Ms. Montes walking towards the van, they positioned themselves outside the van window from where I was sitting.

Their faces read focused and determined as their eyes were locked onto mine, neither of them showed any emotion.

They did not smile nor shed a tear; they just stood there stone-cold with a strong disposition.

As I looked at them, I deeply analyzed the situation.

I processed... Perhaps they know I am laser-focused that they do not want to disrupt my train of thought or perhaps this is their way of letting me know that the parent-child relationship cord has been cut.

It is all irrelevant. Their mere presence and parental expectation of me is powerful enough; no words were necessary today.

MACA, who I consider my mother, is an AI-Robot who works at the shelter as housekeeper.

A couple of weeks over eighteen years ago, MACA found me as a newborn child abandoned with my chihuahua companion Chico outside the back door of the shelter.

Once MACA found Chico and I, she did the right thing by telling the head administrative nurse Ms. Montes that she found us... Ms. Montes was kind enough to help MACA care for Chico and I.

“It’s time to Rock and Roll, Ms. Maria.” -The driver Henry yelled out as he closed the van door.

Together with what Henry yelled out and the sound of the van door closing, reality started to kick in.

The time has come to take on the challenges of life all on my own now.

Closing my eyes, I envisioned and processed...

I am Maria-The Sheet Metal Girl... The greatest Superb Hero of all Super Heroes, because I have the greatest Super Power of all Super Powers.

I possess the Super Human Algorithm: The Code of 3-ERC.

I possess the power of knowledge-Brainpower!

I have The Sheet Metal Girl Shield which represents strength, beauty, and uniqueness and I am a master in the hand-to-hand combat fighting form of Maka-Do Fu.

I took a couple of deep breaths, slowly opened my eyes, and turned my attention back to MACA and Ms. Montes.

The van started to slowly drive away so I stood up placing The Sheet Metal Girl Shield against the window.

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The Sheet Metal Girl Shield was a big part of our life and personal bond with one other.

As we drove away, I shouted out to them, “Thank you, God bless you!”

And then as quick as a circuit pops... MACA and Ms. Montes were gone, they were no longer in my view.

The drive to San Antonio was a little over two hours away, so I had plenty of time to get my thoughts together.

Though I went through my checklist several times, I went through it one more time for peace of mind.

I had my shield, phone, wallet, ID, debit card, and two backpacks with cloths and my hygiene bag.

Lastly, to complete my checklist; I swallowed a big gulp of water from my water bottle that I always carry with me.

I processed... MACA and Ms. Montes always made sure that I downed plenty of water... It is a fact, the human mind and body functions better when hydrated.

As we headed north on a small county road, there were only two things on my mind now.

The mission to revolutionize education for all children, and finding my fraternal twin brother Francisco.

Henry had instructions to drop me off at the Gonzalez residence which was in the inner Westside of San Antonio.

The Gonzalez's were kin to Ms. Montes, and this is where MACA and Ms. Montes had set me up to live for the time being.

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I processed... Perhaps I could talk Henry into helping me find Francisco before he drops me off at the Gonzalez's.

Henry has been driving for the shelter ever since I could remember... I trust Henry, we have a good understanding with one another.

Francisco, who grew up in the City's Foster Care System, always lived with a family in or near the Mexican-American/Hispanic barrio known as Dog Town.

Hopefully, Francisco still lives somewhere in that area, so I can find him with no trouble.

"Hello Henry, how have you been?" -I asked, starting up a conversation.

"So, you got the job of dropping me off in the big city huh?"

Henry was smiling from ear to ear as he looked back at me through the rear-view mirror.

Henry responded, "All's good Ms. Maria, we are all so proud of you, you will do great things for the children."

I processed... Henry has been driving for the shelter ever since I could remember... I trust Henry, we have a good understanding with one another.

"Henry, have you ever heard of Dog Town?" -I asked, "It is off Pinn Road by Rodriguez Park on the far Westside of San Antonio. I would like to go there before you take me to the Gonzalez residence; it is possible that I have a brother there and I would like to find him."

Henry nervously questioned the request - "Dog Town?" "That's a rough part of town Ms. Maria, are you sure you want me to take you over there?"

“Of course, Henry” I responded confidently. “We’ll be just fine; you can stay in the van and I will do all the talking, okay?”

“Well okay Ms. Maria, you are the boss; I’m just the driver.” -said Henry.

Henry looked a little timid about the Dog Town situation, so to ease his mind, I quickly changed the subject.

“How about the Gonzalez family Henry, do you know them?” -I asked.

Henry started to giggle a little bit as he grinned from ear to ear. He then replied - “No, Ms. Maria, but I hear great things about Prudencio and Suse Gonzalez.”

Henry continued as he kept his eyes on the road, “Mr. Prudencio is very well respected throughout the community, but most know him as Wico or Wico the Welder.” (Wico pronounced We-Ko)

“Why is the Westside of San Antonio referred to as the 78207, Henry?” -I asked, to keep the conversation going.

Henry started to hum a rhythm then replied, “I am going to let that be a surprise Ms. Maria; but do not you go worrying any. I promise you will feel right at home.”

Henry went back to humming as he continued to drive. I noticed that he would stop humming every now and then to let out a giggle while slightly shaking his head.

For some reason when Henry giggled, it made me giggle, it was contagious in a good way. Anyhow, Henry’s mind is not concerned about Dog Town anymore, so I let him be.

To utilize my time, I closed my eyes to gather my thoughts and strategize on how to find Francisco. Every time I had an idea, I would open my eyes and do some research on my phone to verify my train of thought. I processed... The Code of 3-ERC... The Code of 3-ERC.

I processed, then researched... I processed, then researched... I did this again until I visualized as many probable outcomes as possible.

My phone notified me that we were entering the city limits of San Antonio. The time sure did fly by I... I must have been in deep thought.

And then as quick as a circuit pops... my body started to feel tingly, the van started to vibrate, and a deep moaning and high-pitched whistle tone came over me.

Before I could process the situation, I noticed the sky getting darker as the vibration of the van got stronger.

Henry started to frantically shout and scream with excitement. "Look, Ms. Maria, look!" -he shouted at me.

As I looked out the window and up towards the sky, I marveled at its beauty and strength; It was awe-inspiring.

And then as quick as a circuit pops... The US AIRFORCE C-5 passed right over us with an incredible roar, rattling the glass windows in the van.

My heart was pumping with adrenaline as I quickly moved to the other side of the van so I could watch the C-5 land on the runway.

With authority The US AIRFORCE C-5 continued to roar as it prepared to land.

"ROARRRRRR!" -I screamed back at the C-5, as I held up The Sheet Metal Girl Shield up to the window.

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“I am Maria-The Sheet Metal Girl!”

“Thank you, God bless you... it was nice to meet you!”

I am not sure what came over me, but the energy that the C-5 had sent through me was electrifying!

It was as if The US AIRFORCE C-5 was talking to me.

I took a couple of deep breaths, then swallowed a big gulp of water from my water bottle.

I processed... that was powerful... almost as powerful as MACA and Ms. Montes’s stone-cold stare of parental expectation.

As I gathered myself, Henry started shouting at me as he looked back through the rear-view mirror with excitement.

“Roar!” “Roar!” “Welcome to Military City USA, Ms. Maria!”

“That C-5 knows who you are now, she knows your name!”

Henry continued shouting as he hit the steering wheel with the palm of his hand. “That’s Right, The Sheet Metal Girl is in the big city of San Antonio now!”

“Roar!” “Roar!” -Henry shouted out again. “First stop, Dog Town; here we come!”

“That’s right Henry, first stop Dog Town.” “Now drink this, I need you hydrated.” -I said, as I handed Henry a bottle of water.

looking out the window I noticed Henry turned off the highway.

Peeking at my GPS I noticed we are on Pinn Road heading north towards Dog Town.

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Henry's right, by the looks of things this side of town is rough; but I have seen neighborhoods like this before in South Texas.

Some even rougher.

I also noticed that it was extremely hot outside as the heatwaves above the asphalt roads swirled through the air.

I peeked at the local news weather App with Curiosity.

Today is going to be over 100 degrees with the humidity level at 77 percent and no rain in sight.

A high-pressure system has stalled over south-central Texas.

"We are getting close now Ms. Maria, do you have an address?" -Henry asked as he grinned at me through the rear-view mirror.

I gave Henry the address to enter in his GPS App, took a couple of deep breaths, and gulped down some water.

As Henry slowly turned from Pinn Road into Dog Town.

I processed... this is it, time to find Francisco.

Henry was driving slowly as he looked back and forth from left to right.

I could sense that Henry was back to being a little nervous.

I felt right at home myself because I could sense the danger of the neighborhood; I could sense the fear and respect it demanded.

And then as quick as a circuit pops... We came across an empty lot where four guys were fighting.

"Stop Henry!" -I yelled out as I slowly rolled down the window in the van.

It was three against one, and the one guy who was fighting alone was taking a whopping, but boy he sure was tough.

The three guys would knock him down, and he would get back up and fight back.

He was going to lose the fight, but he was not going to lose without fighting back. I could see that he was the warrior type of guy.

I started processing to myself... Do a Maka-Do Fu roll and knock the big guy down to the ground.

This will position you to side kick the guy on the right.

I felt bad and wanted to help the one guy, but I knew MACA would not approve of me getting involved, especially when I did not fully understand why they were fighting in the first place.

I processed... Stay in the van... Do not get involved... call the police and tell them what is going on.

“Come on Frank, is that all you got Frank!” -I heard the big guy yell out to the guy taking a whopping as he slowly picked himself off the ground.

I stopped dialing the police because when I heard the name Frank, this triggered something inside of me.

I opened the van door and got out to take a closer look.

“No, Ms. Maria stay in the van Ms. Maria” -Henry shouted

I do not know how to explain it... something inside of me told me that Frank was my brother Francisco, and now I could literally feel the pain as my brother was picking himself up off the ground.

One of the residents yelled at me from their front porch - “Stay away from those guys, get out of here!”

And then as quick as a circuit pops... I was triggered and my blood started to boil and I started running towards the fight.

I could hear Henry shouting as I ran- “No, Ms. Maria no... you might hurt someone!”

For some reason real time had turned into slow motion. As I ran, I thought about MACA training me from a very young age with Maka-Do Fu. I thought about how MACA and Chico gifted me The Sheet Metal Girl Shield.

My Maka-Do Fu algorithmic calculations were processing now-The Sheet Metal Girl was officially in Dog Town!

I Maka-Do Fu rolled towards the big guy and pulled him down to the ground gaining control over him from the top position.

I pressed The Sheet Metal Girl Shield into his chest which dazed him and discouraged him from continuing to fight.

One of the other guys jumped on top of me, but I was expecting this already. So, I rollie pollied him to where I had him in a Maka-Do Fu triangle robo-lock.

“Okay-okay, I give... chill out girl!” -said the guy as I let loose of him and got back up to my feet.

“You and the big guy better not get up, do you understand?” -I yelled out

There is only one guy left and he did not look to interested in fighting anymore and Francisco was catching his second wind.

I processed... This is kinda fun... I like Dog Town...This mindset must be the native side of me coming out.

But the fighting was not over yet, so I had to get back to the fight.

“Do you want me to knock you down like I did your friends?” -I said to the third guy... “Huh... do you... or do you want to stop fighting?”

Looking at Frank, the third guy started yelling at him - “Yo Frank, what’s up with your sister Dog?” “She’s tripping Dog, seriously what’s up with this girl?”

The tone of this guy’s voice really changed my mindset; I could sense that the fighting had come to an end.

“What are you talking about, I don’t have a sister Chubs.” -said Francisco as he was back up to his feet and dusting himself off.

“Look at her native face bro!” “Look at her hair!” -Chubs shouted as he walked over to help the other guys up.

“Yo bro... look at what she did to Eddie bro, this girl is straight up tripping Frank!” “She knocked the wind out of Eddie with that mancy-dobbie shield bro!”

Francisco went over to check on Eddie with the other guys and as he did, I could not keep my eyes off him.

I just knew that Frank was my brother Francisco... he looked just like me.

As I looked at him, I could see a story in his eyes... he was hungry, bruised, and dirty with a noticeable thin scar running down the left side of his face.

I could tell his clothes were hand-me-downs or from a thrift store.

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Francisco reminded me a lot like those who lived in the small towns in South Texas.

Eddie was up on his feet when Francisco turned his attention back to me.

“What’s your name girl, how come you look like me?” -Francisco asked
“Speak up girl, I’m talking to you!”

But before I could reply, Francisco directed the three guys to go on home.
“You guys get Eddie back to his house; I’ll check with you guys later.”

Francisco turned his attention back to me but before he could ask me another question.

I put him in a corner... I was too fast for him.

“How come you never came looking for me Francisco?” You knew I was at the shelter south of here... Do not play with me Francisco.”

“What... What... What are you talking about girl?” “And what’s up with that mancy-dobbie shield and that Kung Fu fighting-girl?” - replied Francisco.

Francisco started doing some Kung Fu moves as if he was fighting an imaginary person; and as he was pretending to fight an imaginary person. He made Chinese fighting sounds. “Cha! Cha! Wha-Wha-Wha! Chu-Cha... Whaaaaaaaaa-a!”

I could not stop laughing. He was a character; and then when he stopped joking around, he asked.

“Is Chubs, right?” “Are you my sister or something?” “I mean, you kinda look just like me.”

“I’ll make you a deal, how about we get you all cleaned up and then I’ll tell you all about it.”

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“Okay girl, what’s your name anyway?” -asked Francisco

“Maria, now where do we get you cleaned up at?”

“The park, I can get cleaned up at the park Maria... I can show you a short cut thru this alley” -Francisco replied as he pointed towards an alley behind the empty lot.

I shouted out to Henry who was still sitting in the van, “Hey Henry, we are going to Rodriguez Park; I will catch up with you later.”

Poor Henry, he looked back at me with a puzzled look on his face.

I processed... Perhaps Henry has the algorithmic circuit spooks?

All the excitement that he just witnessed probably caught him off guard.

“Okay Ms. Maria, you are the boss... I will be waiting for your call.” – replied Henry.

Henry understood what I was really telling him... Henry was street smart and knew how to read between the lines.

I knew that Henry would drive to Rodriguez Park and keep an eye on me. Francisco was waving for me to come with him, “Come on Maria, this way; and don’t worry about your driver.” “I got your back... Noone’s going to fool with you around here.” “This is Dog Town; everyone is like family around here!”

We started to walk thru the alley towards the park as Francisco did all the talking.

“Wow!” “That’s some mancy-dobbie shield Maria.” “Maybe we can stop by the pawn shop and see how much they will give us for that thing?” - Francisco said with laughter.

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I knew that he was joking around when he said it but the fact that he laughed about it when he said it made me feel good.

“I mean look at that thing... seriously Maria!” “We’re going to have to put an alarm and tracker on that mancy-dobbie shield!” -Francisco said again with laughter.

I started to laugh and could not stop laughing as Francisco kept popping out the jokes.

But as Francisco kept popping out the jokes about The Sheet Metal Girl Shield.

I processed within myself... He does not know MACA... MACA’s like an all-knowing mama bear.

MACA knows everything that is going on... MACA knows where I am and where The Sheet Metal Girl Shield’s at, at all times.

The short cut to the park is cool, we are on a dirt trail with tall grass surrounding us and I can see the park on the other side of the Leon Creek.

“Why is there so much brush and trash on this side of the creek Francisco?” -I asked

“The floods... when it rains hard, the water pushes all the debris and trash to the Dog Town side.” Laughing, Francisco continued- “I think it adds character to this side of the creek myself.”

We got to the bottom of the creek and the water level looked deep.

“How do we get across Francisco?” -I asked

Francisco squatted down a little in front of me and replied, “It’s not deep at all Maria, it just looks deep.” “Come on you will be okay.”

I hopped onto Francisco’s back and we started across the creek. I started to think back to the shelter playground.

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We use to give each other hitch-back rides all the time when we played outside in the dirt.

Francisco was right, the water level of the creek was only up to his knees. I could have walked across myself but I am glad that I did not; this moment was the beginning of us bonding with one another.

We safely got to the other side of the creek and were now in Rodriguez Park.

Francisco squatted a little as I hopped back onto the ground from his back.

Francisco pointed towards the parking lot of the park, “Hey look! Ms. Cantu’s Raspa Van is in the parking lot!

Do you want something Maria?”

I processed... I just love a Mangonada with chamoy and a Chinese candy, this is the circuit breaker!

“You go get cleaned up, and I’ll get us something from the van... tell me what you want?”-I replied

“I want a Mangonada with chamoy and a Chinese candy, that’s my favorite.” - replied Francisco.

I processed... Interesting, we are twins.

“Okay, I got it... now go on and get cleaned up.” -I said.

Francisco, jogged over to the men’s room to get cleaned up.

I ordered three medium Mangonada’s with chamoy and a Chinese candy from Ms. Cantu’s Raspa Van.

“No Charge,” -said the young girl in the van.

“No charge?” “I must pay you; it’s the right thing to do.” -I replied.

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The young girl smiled from ear to ear, “There is no charge for you.” “I know who you are, we have heard stories about you and your shield over the last couple of days; people say you are a real-life superb hero.”

Taken by surprise on what the young girl said, I processed... The Code of 3-ERC... The Code of 3-ERC.

“I must pay you for the items you’re selling and your service.” “I will leave you some money in the tip jar and we can call it even; what do you say?”

The young girl never responded, she just continued to smile as I walked away with the Mangonada’s towards Henry who I spotted sitting underneath a nearby tree.

I handed Henry his Mangonada, “Here you go Henry, a Mangonada with chamoy and a Chinese candy.”

Henry accepted the Mangonada but did not say anything in return. He just stared at me as he started to hum as he put a spoon full of Mangonada in his mouth.

Henry swallowed what he had in his mouth, let out a giggle while slightly shaking his head and stared back at me.

“Henry what’s wrong with you?” “Henry, do you have the algorithmic circuit spooks?”

Henry replied, “I don’t have the algorithmic circuit spooks Ms. Maria, I was worried, you could have hurt someone back there in that empty lot.”

I did not get a chance to reply to Henry because I could hear Francisco as he ran up on us.

“Hey Maria, what’s going on over here... is this your driver?” -Francisco continued, “Hey driver, how’s the Mangonada?”

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Henry did not say anything in response to Francisco, he just shook his head, giggled and stared at me again as I handed Francisco his Mangonada.

I took a bite of my Mangonada as I stared back at Henry.

I processed... Henry's staring at me and not saying anything because he does not want to interfere; he knows that I will teach Francisco some manners when the time is right.

"Henry, we will be back shortly... I want to talk with Francisco down by the creek." -I said

"You're the boss Ms. Maria; I'll be right here eating my Mangonada waiting for you." -replied Henry

Francisco and I walked backed towards the Leon Creek. "Francisco, why were you fighting with those guys in Dog Town?"

Francisco took the Chinese candy that he was sucking on out of his mouth. "That was not fighting Maria, we were just toughening each other up." He continued- "It is a cold dark world out there Maria; Eddie, Chubs and Garcia are my friends... We make each other stronger by sparring three against one."

I sat down native style underneath a tree close to the creek as Francisco continued to talk. Francisco followed my lead as he sat down next to me; I noticed that he sat down in a native style as well.

Francisco was a talker; he told me all about growing up in the City's Foster Care System. All the family's he has lived with over the years and how many times he has been in trouble with the law.

I could see Francisco's eyes light up when he started talking about working with concrete crews and roofing crews as a hustle to make money.

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Laughing Francisco said, “I started working construction when I was ten Maria, look at these muscles.”

I laughed with Francisco as he flexed his biceps for me and continued to talk.

As Francisco talked, I looked him over from head to toe. He was skinny with muscles and veiny; it was easy to tell that he was a strong, hard worker.

Francisco stopped talking for a second and looked across the creek at the Dog Town side as he put another spoon full of Mangonada in his mouth. I could sense that he was thinking about Dog Town, perhaps his bond with the Mexican-American/Hispanic barrio triggered something inside of him.

I asked carefully, “Francisco, why do they call it Dog Town?”

Francisco's personality changed from a nice funny guy to one with a serious demeanor.

Francisco started to explain, “Way back in the day a couple of guys from the hood named this Mexican-American/Hispanic barrio Dog Town, well because... there was a lot of dogs!”

“As the story goes, these guys were at a party in the city when they were confronted by some other guys from another hood. They were being confronted because nobody knew what hood these guys were from.”

“You see Maria, way back in the day Dog Town did not have a name. It was just a Little Mexico type of neighborhood with squatters living on land by the creek.”

“These guys who were confronted at the party did not have an identity or belong to a hood. They had to think fast; so, they answered back-Dog Town.”

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“Why were there so many dogs in this neighborhood Francisco?” -I asked Francisco responded, “This elderly woman, I think her name was Manuelita. She loved dogs so much that she took care of as many dogs as she could. A lot of people in all the city knew of Manuelita because there were so many dogs on her property.”

I processed... Perhaps this is a good time to teach Francisco about manners.

“Francisco, if Manuelita was an elderly woman. Wouldn’t she be known as Ms. Manuelita?” -I asked

“There is no Ms. or Mr. in Dog Town Maria. There’s only Eddie, Chubs, Garcia, Manuelita. There is no... what is the word?”

“Formalities?” -I asked

“That’s the word, formalities.” Francisco continued, “There’s no formalities or dogalities in Dog Town.” “Hey wait a minute, you are trying to teach me... what’s the word?”

“Manners?” -I asked

“That’s the word, manners.” Francisco continued, “I don’t need to be taught manners, this is who I am Maria.”

Once again, I was too fast for him. “Wait a minute, I am not trying to teach you anything Francisco. You say Manuelita and I say Ms. Manuelita.” I continued, “We are both right. It is called freedom of speech Francisco; it was just a question.” “Don’t get all mancy-dobbie with the dogalities on me Francisco.”

Francisco started to laugh again, “What... What... wait a minute, what are you talking about Ms. Maria-The Sheet Metal Girl; The Superb Hero with The Sheet Metal Girl Shield?” **All content copyright©2026 Ray Adam Basaldua-62. “Rough Draft”**

I processed... “Uh-Oh!”

“That is right, I know who you are... I knew from the first time I saw you carrying that shield in the empty lot. Word spreads fast in South Texas, perhaps faster than you calculated.”

I processed... “Uh-Oh! Did he just say calculated?”

Francisco was still laughing, “You thought you were to fast for me, but I was just playing sleepy Maria; Duh, what’s the word... Duh, what’s the word?”

Francisco continued, “I know what formalities and manners are sis.”

And it was at this moment that we completely bonded and my eyes started to tear up.

I processed... Francisco is smart, a different type of smart; street smart, ghetto smart, dogalities smart. Francisco is The Sheet Metal Man, the perfect partner to help me introduce The Code of 3-ERC and revolutionize education for all children.

Francisco saw that I was emotional and did not say anything, he just let me sit there for a minute so I could get myself together.

“I’m listening” -said Francisco as he looked at me straight in the eyes, “let’s hear it.”

I could not believe it... now I was the one talking and I could not shut up. I told Francisco all about MACA and Chico, and how I was raised and coded with the Super Human Algorithm -The Code of 3-ERC.

Wiping the tears from my eyes, I told Francisco all about Ms. Montes and how I was trained with the hand-to-hand combat fighting form of Maka-Do Fu.

I told him about the caverns, “The MACA-Chico Project” and how MACA and Chico gifted me the shield when they finished constructing it.

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And that this is how I became known as -The Sheet Metal Girl who carry's
"The Sheet Metal Girl Shield."

I told Francisco that the shield's ultimate purpose was to protect me from negativity in my journey. That I found him by using AI-facial recognition software and by researching various public data base systems, by using The Code of 3-ERC.

But most importantly, I told Francisco all about the mission to revolutionize education for all children and how I was obsessed with the mission.

After hearing about the mission to revolutionize education for all children.

Francisco took an oath to protect me, learn from me, and help me in the mission any way that he could.

Francisco stood up and thumped his chest with his righthand palm, "I got your back sis and you are going to need my help. The big city is a rough place and not everything is what it appears to be."

Francisco had a lot of positive energy, and was getting excited about our journey together; and I was getting excited too, because it is great to know that my brother was supporting me.

But I could also see that Francisco did not fully understand why this was so important, so I wrote down these words for him in the dirt by the creek.

And as I wrote down these words in the dirt by the creek, I said the words out loud: "Everyone's mind is like a super computer, but unfortunately no one knows exactly how another person's super computer operates. Some will eventually come to understand The Code of 3-ERC, others will learn to understand The Code of 3-ERC with less time, and then some will immediately understand The Code of 3-ERC, and become Geniuses!"

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Francisco's eyes were wide open and I could see that the light bulb was getting brighter. "How does The Code of 3-ERC work sis?"

I explained to Francisco: There are individuals trying to find certain information because they want to do something meaningful with their life.

But the information they are seeking is not easily found because the information is only found in pieces, like a puzzle. The (E) is one piece of the puzzle, the (R) is the second piece of the puzzle and the (C) is the third piece of the puzzle.

Francisco is frozen like a statue, staring at me, and listening intensely.

When you put the information from the (E), the (R), and the (C) together; then you find the information you are looking for.

"The Code of 3-ERC, it's a code not a 3-piece puzzle." -said Francisco.

Francisco continued, "It is a code, but you are using a 3-piece puzzle as an analogy to help paint a picture of how it works and comes together. It is more like a formula or algorithm."

And then as quick as a circuit pops, Francisco triggered something inside of me which made me do a Maka-Do Fu roll towards him and pull him down to the ground.

I gained control over him from the top position; I placed him in a Maka-Do-Fu triangle robo-lock and gently pressed The Sheet Metal Girl Shield into his chest.

"Okay smart guy, perhaps you want to tell me how the whole code works now, huh!"

Francisco's laughing and laughing, "You're lucky you're my sister or I would have to get rough with you and that mancy-dobbie shield."

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He continued as he laughed, “First you tell me to get cleaned up and now you are getting me all dirty, what’s up with that?” “I’m going to have to teach you about manners sis.”

Francisco and I laughed together as we both got back up to our feet.

Francisco, being the character that he is started dancing like a Native Indian around the words I wrote into the dirt by the creek.

He chanted as he danced - I have The Code of 3... I have The Code of 3... I have The Code of 3-ERC

It looked like fun! So, I joined in the dancing and the chanting!

But I did the Robot Dance, because this is how MACA, Chico and I would dance together at the shelter.

Francisco and I were like two best friends having a good time... And after the dancing and the chanting stopped.

I asked Francisco to sign his name under the words in the dirt.

Francisco hesitated for a minute as he looked down at the dirt, but then he signed, Francisco.

And then I added after Francisco’s name, -The Sheet Metal Man

The dirt by the creek then read:

“Everyone’s mind is like a super computer, but unfortunately no one knows exactly how another person’s super computer operates. Some will eventually come to understand ERC, others will learn to understand ERC with less time, and then some will immediately understand ERC, and become Geniuses!”

Francisco-The Sheet Metal Man

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Francisco looked at me with his eyes wide open, “How come you wrote, -The Sheet Metal Man after my name sis?”

I replied, “We are a team now Francisco, I know you have my back.”

“Of course I do sis, but... but... I am Frank from Dog Town, you do not understand.” He continued, “I am no good sis... I am not good enough to be like you... I am not good enough to be The Sheet Metal Man.”

Francisco started pacing back and forth as he looked at the words written in the dirt.

I processed... The Code of 3-ERC... The Code of 3-ERC...

I stopped Francisco from pacing back and forth and looked him directly in the eyes. “Francisco, you do not have to be like me and nobody expects you to be like someone other than yourself. I know you will try to be good and people will see that you are trying to be good by your actions. This is why you are the perfect person to be The Sheet Metal Man.”

I could see tears starting to form in Francisco’s eyes... So, I placed my right index finger at the top of his belly and whispered these words to him: “I will code your mind using the Super Human Algorithm, The Code of 3-ERC. You will become an independent, free-thinking, self-educating genius. You are strong, beautiful, and unique... You are a Superb Hero... You are The Sheet Metal Man.”

Francisco’s eyes were locked onto mine and I could see that he did not have the words to reply.

So, to ease the moment I said, “besides every Superb Hero-Girl, needs a Superb Hero-Man.” Francisco put me in a headlock and mocked me as he playfully messed up my hair. “Besides every Superb Hero-Girl, needs a Superb Hero-Man... That was mancy-dobbie sis, real mancy-dobbie.”

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Francisco released me from the headlock and started dancing again like a Native Indian around the words I wrote into the dirt by the creek.

But before I could join Francisco in all the fun, I could hear Henry calling out to me as he approached.

“Ms. Maria... Ms. Maria... Everyone is worried about you, Wico and Suse are expecting you; I told them that we were on the way.”

“Great, call them back and tell them that Francisco is coming with us.” -I replied

Francisco looked at me with a confused look on his face, “Are we going to Wico the Welders house in the 78207 sis?”

“Yes, do you know Wico?” -I replied

“Everyone knows Wico sis... He is a like and elderly wise man that everyone respects; He helps people.” Francisco continued, “You are going to like Wico sis, he’s got your back.”

Francisco squatted down a little in front of me and I hopped onto his back for a hitch-back ride.

“Come on Frank from Dog Town-The Sheet Metal Man, let’s load up the van and head to the 78207 to see Wico the Welder!”

Henry did not say a word; he just shook his head and giggled with a smile on his face from one ear to the other.

As Francisco carried me to the van, I took a drink of water from my water bottle. I processed... It is a fact, the human mind and body functions better when hydrated.

Chapter 4-Introduction

“When I was a child, MACA used to take Chico and I to visit all the small towns in South Texas.

From what I remember... All those small towns looked just like San Antonio.

San Antonio feels like a big small town to me; it is rich with heritage and culture.

There is also a strong community spirit here... Just like home.

With Francisco by my side and my shield in hand, I feel invincible.

It is time to act.

It is time to inculcate The Code of 3-ERC: Ethics, Relationships, Cognition, into the community.

It is time to develop a positive, healthy thinking pattern into the community; So that as a community, we can boldly blossom into our fullest potential."

-Maria, The Sheet Metal Girl

Wico the Welder-

Wico's (pronounced We-Ko) real name was Prudencio and his wife's name was Suse (pronounced Sue-Se).

Wico worked out of his garage which was in the backyard of his house, and if you were looking for Wico, you were sure to find him there.

Suse on the other hand, she considered her safe space, the house.

Wico's house was in the inner Westside of San Antonio, which is the 78207-area code.

Francisco kept referring to the inner Westside of San Antonio as just the 78207, apparently, just saying 78207, is street slang for identifying this area of town.

As we got close to Wico's house, it was easy for me to identify his property.

There was a big sign painted like a Mexican flag on the gate, and on the sign, the words read-Wico the Welder.

Wico's house was also surrounded by a unique metal fence.

I could tell much of the materials used in constructing Wico's fence were left-overs from jobs he had worked on, because none of the fence was uniform.

Francisco even pointed out to me a couple of old engine camshafts that were used to hold up the fence.

I processed... Wico's metal fence is interesting; he is very artistic.

As we walked up Wico's driveway and headed for the backyard garage.

I could smell something cooking from inside the house, and it smelled delicious.

I also thought I heard a very familiar sound, but I was not quite sure if I did or if it was my imagination working on me... But before I could listen for the familiar sound again.

“Do you smell that, Maria?” -asked Francisco.

Then he jokingly put me in a headlock while playfully messing with my hair.

“Maria-The Sheet Metal Girl, welcome to the 78207!” -said Francisco.

Wico was organizing his tools in his garage when we walked into the backyard.

He was a tall, thin, older man that looked like a very hard worker.

He had strong facial features like a carved rock statue and his skin tone was medium to dark olive from being outdoors all the time.

To my understanding... Wico was like an old wise man who many from the community sought advice from.

“Hello Mr. Prudencio” -I said.

Wico slowly turned around and looked directly into my eyes... He was stone cold.

As Wico looked at me, it was like time had come to a standstill for that moment.

Wico had golden-hazel eyes, they were beautiful, but haunting at the same time.

Looking into Wico's eyes was like looking into the eyes of a wild rainforest jaguar.

He had me locked in his sights... He was calculating... And he knew, that I knew, that he was reading my mind.

He was figuring out who I was, where I was coming from, and why I was there in his backyard.

I processed... Wico knows The Code of 3-ERC.

Then Wico's eyes shifted focus towards Francisco.

I could literally see him take a deep breath as he cracked a smile.

Wico's facial expression went from stone cold, to that of a child who just entered a candy store for the very first time.

Then Wico looked towards the back-screen door and called out- "Güeda, Güeda, come, come... Maria-The Sheet Metal Girl... She is here!"

Looking back at us, Wico asked- "Where have you been, we have been waiting for you, Suse has been worried!"

Suse slowly came out of the back screen door into the backyard.

Suse and Wico were complete opposites.

Suse was short and a little chubby with light skin, and because Suse had light skin, Wico nicknamed her-Güeda.

She also had big-round eyes that were a beautiful dark brown tone and a gentle smile.

Unlike Wico, Suse had the face of an angel.

It was like she did not have a worry in the world; I could tell Suse had peace of mind.

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“Please come in and eat, we have plenty of food” -said Suse.

Suse’s words were soft and caring as if she was talking to a newborn child.

I could see Francisco getting a little emotional because he has never experienced this type of kindness before.

Growing up in the foster care system was cut and dry, Francisco was structured much more like Wico, stone cold.

We entered the home and the smell of the food was so delicious, and Suse and Wico’s home was very comfortable.

It was a simple home, yet very warm and inviting.

As we were talking and eating, I heard that familiar sound again.

I was trying to figure out what was going on, because I did not know if what I was hearing was real or just my imagination working on me again.

But Suse had seen the expression of curiosity on my face.

She smiled, then looked at Wico as if she was asking for approval.

Wico smiled back at Suse and gave her a little nod.

My curiosity was now through the roof.

“Come with me Maria” -said Suse, as she stood up.

Suse took my hand and led me to the back room of the house.

She opened the door and in the corner on the floor was a cardboard fruit box covered with a tiny poncho.

As I looked at the cardboard fruit box, it felt as if my heart was in my stomach... All I could think about was Chico.

Then a little chihuahua head peaked out from the tiny poncho, she was beautiful, and looking right at me.

“This is Mama Cha-Cha and Baby Girl” -said Suse.

Then Suse kneeled next to the cardboard fruit box and softly pulled back the tiny poncho.

Sleeping like a human baby without a worry in the world was an all-white petite chihuahua cuddled up to her mama.

“Hi Baby Girl,” -Suse said, as she gently rubbed Baby Girl’s belly.

Suse explained to me that Baby Girl would never leave Mama Cha-Cha’s side even though she was ready for adoption.

Apparently, everyone wanted to adopt Baby Girl, but she did not want to leave.

So, I kneeled next to Suse by the cardboard fruit box and gently rubbed Baby Girl’s belly.

“Would you like to come with me Baby Girl, I will take care of you?” -I asked

“Yes Maria, I would like to come with you” -I said, answering myself for Baby Girl as if I was having a conversation with her.

Baby Girl opened her eyes and looked at me as I continued to gently rub her belly.

Then she slowly came to her feet and wiggled wildly as if she just got out of a pool of water.

Baby Girl let out a big yawn and then licked her lips.

She then came out of the cardboard fruit box and pawed at me to pick her up. All content copyright©2026 Ray Adam Basaldua-74. **“Rough Draft”**

Wico and Francisco were standing in the doorway.

“Baby Girl picked you Maria” -said Wico.

Suse and I were sitting at the kitchen table; I had Baby Girl in a baby sling across the front of my chest as she was sound asleep.

Suse had Mama Cha-Cha in her lap and was softly rubbing her head.

Wico and Francisco, they were outside by the garage sitting at the picnic table.

Those two thought we were inside talking girl stuff, but the reality was, we were listening to them talk through the back-screen door.

Wico was mentoring Francisco on The Code of 3-ERC.

They were bonding, and a newfound mentor-student relationship was forming.

Wico spent the rest of the day building Francisco’s confidence up as he showed Francisco all his tools in his workshop and how they worked.

He was telling Francisco over and over- “You are big and strong; you are the perfect person to be The Sheet Metal Man.”

“Maria needs someone just like you to help her.” -said Wico.

Francisco was taking it all in, he really appreciated Wico’s guidance.

Then Wico started talking to Francisco about the history of San Antonio, apparently, Wico was a big history buff- “Francisco, did you know that San Antonio was founded as a Spanish mission and colonial outpost in 1718?”

“And that in 1731 the city became the first chartered civil settlement in what is now present-day Texas?” - asked Wico.

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Francisco looked intrigued, he was learning information that he had never been introduced to before.

“I know the Mission Drive Inn Theatre on the Southside... Is that the Mission you are talking about?” -asked Francisco.

Wico just gave Francisco a big smile, and replied- “You’re close Francisco, real close!”

Then Francisco asked Wico about Native Indians- “How about Native Indians, do you know about Native Indians Wico?”

“Were there any Native Indians in San Antonio Wico?” -asked Francisco.

“Oh yes, lots of Native Indians Francisco!” -replied Wico

Wico then told Francisco all about the San Antonio River Basin and how it was home to the Payaya, Coahuiltecan, Karankawa, Lipan Apache and Tonkawa Indians for many years.

“There were lots of Native Indians in San Antonio before the Spaniards came Francisco.” -said Wico

“Well, what did the Spaniards do to all the Native Indians?”

“Are the Spaniards bad people Wico?” -asked Francisco.

Wico thought for a second, then he picked up a small mirror in his workshop.

He held the mirror in front of Francisco, so he could see his reflection.

Wico asked Francisco- “what do you see when you look into this mirror?”

Francisco looked a little confused... he replied- “Myself, what does that have to do with Spaniards and Native Indians Wico?” -asked Francisco.

Wico let out a little chuckle and then explained to Francisco that many Spaniards married Native Indians.

Francisco was looking down at the ground and was slowly shuffling his feet as if he was moving dirt around... His hands were in his pockets.

Then Francisco started to think out loud...

“Spaniards and Native Indians must have had babies, so there are many people who are part Spaniard and part Native Indian.”

Suddenly, Francisco looked back up at Wico- “Oh, where are the part Spaniard, part Native Indian people Wico?” he continued- “Wico, are we the part Spaniard and part Native Indian people?” -asked Francisco.

Wico responded, “Yes Francisco, this is why we are referred to as Hispanics.”

Wico continued to build up Francisco’s confidence and then got Francisco geared up for his journey to revolutionize education for all children.

Wico geared Francisco up with a special hard hat, sun glasses and a tool bag with secret compartments for his ERC tools.

Wico really had Francisco looking like a real Superb Hero!

Wico looked at the back-screen door once again and called out- “Güeda! Güeda! Bring Maria out here, the time has come... Francisco is ready for his gift!”

Suse and I went out into the backyard with Mama Cha-Cha and Baby Girl.

We saw Francisco all geared up in The Sheet Metal Man armor and pretended like we did not know how he got it.

“Hey you look great!” Suse said, as she started off with the compliments on Francisco’s armor to put him at ease.

Then with her soft angel like voice Suse continued- “You look very nice Francisco; you are a real Superb Hero!”

And with that, Francisco got all boyish-shy and bashful.

So, I started complimenting him for fun because I wanted to see how bashful he would get if I teased him.

“Look at you Mr. Superb Hero-The Sheet Metal Man... you are all geared up for action!”

Suse let out a little giggle and Wico let out a chuckle, because they knew I was being sarcastic.

Francisco knew I was being sarcastic too, which is why he jokingly put me in a headlock again.

“I’ll show you Mr. Superb Hero-The Sheet Metal Man!” -he said, as he started to playfully mess with my hair.

We all could not stop laughing, we were having a good time.

Wico pulled himself together from the laughter- “Okay, everyone please wait here, I want to show you something very special that has taken me years to fabricate.”

As Wico went into his workshop to retrieve Francisco’s Shield, we all sat at the picnic table.

Francisco’s demeanor went from boyish-shy and bashful too nervous.

He sensed that Wico was going to get The Sheet Metal Man Shield.

Francisco then looked at my shield and started to think out-loud. -

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“Can Wico make something like this; The Sheet Metal Girl Shield is so beautiful and unique!”

Suse explained to Francisco- “MACA made The Sheet Metal Girl Shield just for Maria, because the shield fits her persona.”

“This is why the Maria’s shield is so beautiful and unique, because there is only one.”

“MACA made The Sheet Metal Girl Shield with love Francisco.”

Suse continued- “Wico has made The Sheet Metal Man Shield just for you Francisco, I’m sure you will be pleased.”

When Wico came back, he had The Sheet Metal Man Shield in his arms.

The Shield was rough around the edges, yet it was beautiful, bold, and authentic.

Wico then explained to Francisco- “The Sheet Metal Man Shield represents strength, wisdom and fearlessness.”

Wico fabricated The Sheet Metal Man Shield by using very special materials which he collected over the years, from sources like the battle grounds surrounding the Alamo.

And from land around several early Spanish and Native American settlements.

It had taken Wico almost 15 years to construct The Sheet Metal Man Shield, and now he was gifting it to Francisco.

Francisco was grateful to Wico for his shield, and thanked him as he accepted it.

Wico then gave Francisco a direct order- “With The Sheet Metal Man Shield you will protect your sister at all times, and never abandon her in your journey together.”

Francisco was humbled, and respectfully replied- “yes sir, I understand.”

We all went to bed early that night because Francisco and I had a big day ahead of us.

Francisco slept in Wico’s workshop on an old steel-spring cot.

He did not mind one bit, in fact he said the workshop felt just like home to him, just like Dog Town.

Now, I slept with Baby Girl in the guest bedroom in the house.

Suse made us feel right at home, and the bed was so comfortable.

The next morning Wico woke us all up at 5:30am!

MACA never made me get up that early, then again, that is probably because she was with Chico in the caverns making my shield.

“Rise - rise - rise!” -Wico would say. “Those who rise early get the first taco!”

Wico was just like a drill Sargent; there was no fooling around most of the time.

By the time I got cleaned up, everyone was already at the breakfast table waiting for me.

“Sit down Maria,” -said Suse in her angel-like voice, “We must give thanks before we eat.”

We all held hands as Wico said a prayer for our meal, and for the beautiful day that was to come.

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Suse was a great cook, and all the food that was on the table was healthy.

MACA would have been pleased, MACA always made me eat healthy.

Francisco and Wico are big eaters, and I could tell that Francisco was picking up Wico's habits as his movements started to mimic Wico's.

Wico was now a role model for Francisco, and I could sense that Francisco was studying and analyzing Wico, because he respected him.

The best part about their Relationship (R), was that Wico expected a lot from Francisco.

And Wico's expectation of Francisco, was like a fire that helped motivate him for our mission.

When we finished eating, Wico looked right at me and asked- "So, what's the plan Maria?"

"Your mission to revolutionize education for all children is an urgent matter.... I am sure you have a plan, right?"

But before I could respond, Francisco was already answering Wico's question. - "I think we should open an online school and start educating the public on how The Code of 3-ERC works."

Suse was very supportive of Francisco's plan- "That's a great idea Francisco, great idea!"

I could see Wico nodding his head in agreement with Suse's support.

"No!" -I said emphatically. The serious Maria was coming out of me now, and everyone was listening closely.

"We will first go to the root cause of the problem." "When you build a house, you must start from the bottom and then build up."

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The Sheet Metal Girl & The Sheet Metal Man represent someone who is honest and willing to work hard. They are fictional Super Hero characters and do not possess any super human powers.

Their powers are BRAINPOWER, and they apply their BRAINPOWER by using the Super Human Algorithm-The Code of 3-ERC: Ethics- Relationships-Cognition.

The Sheet Metal Girl & The Sheet Metal Man help others by introducing them to The Code of 3-ERC: Ethics-Relationships-Cognition. They recognize that these essential ingredients help others develop a strong, positive, healthy thinking pattern.

The Sheet Metal Girl & The Sheet Metal Man are Masters of The Code of 3-ERC: Ethics-Relationships-Cognition, and always carry their Sheet Metal Shield to reflect negativity.

