

No way to win

By Constance Scrafield

Alone in the darkened room with the blank sheet in front of me, I am determined not to dredge the same old complaints about the way we feed our children and poison our environment on every level, then wonder why 25% of us or those to the south of us are obese with youngsters who are not expected to have the life expectancy that we do ? for the first time ever.

I don't want to bother with obvious but dire predictions, so simply delivered by the wonder man, Stephen Hawking, just having celebrated his 75th birthday after having developed ALS when he was only 21 years of age ? that clear and very straightforward prediction that we are done ? finished ? extinct ? getting what we deserve in less than 100 years ? take it on the chin, put your affairs in order for no one to read or get out of town and go live ?in space,? as Dr. Hawking put it. ?In space...?

It's late ? more than half way between bed time and the morning but I don't care. I just want to sit up and talk to my blank sheet about the wonders we will leave behind ? the cockroaches who are the only ones pretty well assured of being the species that can survive us ? tough enough, ugly enough but miraculously resilient.

There is the Canadian Shield, I guess ? if a soul were to dig deep enough into those brave stones, down, down between such solid walls, maybe so deep as to feel the heat of the planet's centre and pray for access to the deepest waters, still untapped somehow at a depth so tremendous that our arrogant machinery had not yet penetrated that sanctuary.

Dr. Hawking, however, did not mention the Shield as a possible safe haven at any depth.

No, he talked about and has been talking about escape ?to space?. Hysterically funny ? we've been trying for that trip every since we first lifted our eyes heavenward and noted there were things up there. We started writing stories about those tempting lights, who lure us to join them if only in our limited way of making up tales about them, creating our own satisfying fictions about them and then passing our fictions down to the people as truths by which they were obliged to live their lives....

Ah, yes, we have been reaching for those stars and, with every generation, that wish and pining has grown so that we are spending enough on that ambition and, of course, our endless warring, to have saved the planet and fed every person on it 10 times over. The diplomatic, or, more likely, scientific observer of humanity and its folly, Dr Hawking has not mentioned our wasted life, liberty and the stolen chances to pursue happiness; he only lays it down that this is what we have done; here are the consequences and the only choice ?if we want to survive,? is to suspend all hope of saving ourselves and our home and to leave it.

Don't think for a moment that there isn't every effort imaginable being made to achieve this. You can well believe that the best there are by way of scientists, engineers, and all their kin are being paid big bucks to build the rockets, research and find alternatives: just some air and, for goodness' sake ? water and we'll make do with it somehow ? living in unbelievable man-made and shipped caves ? they were experimenting already in the north: pretending to live on Mars. They came away from the experience convinced of the possibility of such a life but not of its attractions, except that it might be the only life there is.

The people making cars have seen the light of wasted time and have turned their attention to the more meaningful business of busloads of folk going into space.

At first, this was just a money-making venture to amuse tourists who had seen all the sights here ? climbed the mountains, swum the seas, visited all the old pillars worth seeing. Now, though, under the shadow of Dr. Hawking's plain warnings, they are breeding space-worthy craft to set sail forever in the hopes of finding a new world completely away from this ruined, decimated world.

There is water on the moon but this is such a small orb that it could not contain the restlessness of the human ambition and need to spread out to accommodate all our ?stuff? which we will inevitably want to take with us.

No, the moon can only be a jumping-off point for travel to where we can get a grip , have a life, plant our flags and, as the song says, ?Start all over again!?