**第九届“郑州大学—《英语世界》杯”翻译大赛英译汉原文**

**The Whoomper Factor**

By *Nathan Cobb*

【1】As this is being written, snow is falling in the streets of Boston in what weather forecasters like to call “record amounts.” I would guess by looking out the window that we are only a few hours from that magic moment of paralysis, as in *Storm Paralyzes Hub*. Perhaps we are even due for an *Entire Region Engulfed* or a *Northeast Blanketed*, but I will happily settle for mere local disablement. And the more the merrier.

【2】Some people call them blizzards, others nor’easters. My own term is whoompers, and I freely admit looking forward to them as does a baseball fan to April. Usually I am disappointed, however; because tonight’s storm warnings too often turn into tomorrow’s light flurries.

【3】Well, flurries be damned. I want the real thing, complete with Volkswagens turned into drifts along Commonwealth Avenue and the MBTA’s third rail frozen like a hunk of raw meat. A storm does not even begin to qualify as a whoomper unless Logan Airport is shut down for a minimum of six hours.

【4】The point is, whoompers teach us a lesson. Or rather several lessons. For one thing, here are all these city folks who pride themselves on their instinct for survival, and suddenly they cannot bear to venture into the streets because they are afraid of being swallowed up. Virtual prisoners in their own houses is what they are. In northern New England, the natives view nights such as this with casual indifference, but let a whoomper hit Boston and the locals are not only knee deep in snow but also in befuddlement and disarray.

【5】The lesson? That there is something more powerful out there than the sacred metropolis. It is not unlike the message we can read into the debacle of the windows falling out of the John Hancock Tower; just when we think we’ve got the upper hand on the elements, we find out we are flies and someone else is holding the swatter. Whoompers keep us in our place.

【6】They also slow us down, which is not a bad thing for urbania these days. Frankly, I’m of the opinion Logan should be closed periodically, snow or not, in tribute to the lurking suspicion that it may not be all that necessary for a man to travel at a speed of 600 miles per hour. In a little while I shall go forth into the streets and I know what I will find. People will actually be *walking*, and the avenues will be bereft of cars. It will be something like those marvelous photographs of Back Bay during the nineteenth century, wherein the lack of clutter and traffic makes it seem as if someone has selectively airbrushed the scene.

【7】And, of course, there will be the sound of silence tonight. It will be almost deafening. I know city people who have trouble sleeping in the country because of the lack of noise, and I suspect this is what bothers many of them about whoompers. Icy sidewalks and even fewer parking spaces we can handle, but please, God, turn up the volume. City folks tend not to believe in anything they can’t hear with their own ears.

【8】It should also be noted that nights such as this are obviously quite pretty, hiding the city’s wounds beneath a clean white dressing. But it is their effect on the way people suddenly treat each other that is most fascinating, coming as it does when city dwellers are depicted as people of the same general variety as those New Yorkers who stood by when Kitty Genovese was murdered back in 1964.

【9】There’s nothing like a good whoomper to get people thinking that everyone walking towards them on the sidewalk might not be a mugger, or that saying hello is not necessarily a sign of perversion. You would think that city people, more than any other, would have a strong sense of being in the same rough seas together, yet it is not until a quasi catastrophe hits that many of them stop being lone sharks.

【10】But enough of this. There’s a whoomper outside tonight, and it requires my presence.