The Image:

This is my last term at MIT and for my final creative imaging project I wanted to leave with something that would remind me of all the great memories I’ve had during my time here and of how I’ve come to appreciate how beautiful a city Boston really is. Therefore as the idea for my photo project I wanted to create an image that mixed in all the different elements that make Boston such a vibrant city – right from the melange of old and modern architecture, it’s unique history and New England patriotism, madcap street spirit, very palpable student life-force, Red Sox fanaticism, and of course that atrociously cold, annoying windy, yet beautiful Charles River!
I began my first step by taking a collection of photos of the main Boston landmarks. Specifically I focussed on taking those that captured my visions of the Boston experience, reminding me most the elements that would be familiar from the perspective of an MIT student. To reflect the fact that my time here has truly been an adventurous experience, and at times actually pretty overwhelming, I chose to have at the centre of my image two explorers punting through a purple tinted Charles River embarking on the long journey that awaits them, just as it had awaited me. An important part of my objective in making this image was to ensure I maintained the right building perspectives, proportions and positions so that the frame I captured looked convincing rather than a pasted collage of pictures.

The Photos:

Below are some of the pictures I used in creating the final image, including the Prudential, Citco sign, Quincy market, statue of Quincy Adams, Charles River, MIT - Killian Court, Sailing boats, Red Sox Logo (sourced from the internet).
I used these and a couple more as the building blocks for my final image. In total there were 29 layers with an additional 25 vector mask layers which I found to be very useful. Vector masks are basically adjustment layers used to remove parts of an image without actually deleting any part of the original image – so are useful for reverting mistakes. Below I’ve outlined the major steps involved in creating the final image. There were many smaller changes I made to tweak the final looks.

**The Sweat & Blood!:**

The process started off with forming the sky. I used all the sky images I had, applied the **hue & saturations** adjustments, and also changed the **opacity** of each layer to get the desired effect.

Next I positioned the background buildings. To get the right perspective and depth, I used the **free transform** (Ctrl+T) and **warp** tools. Pressing Shift+Ctrl gives full 2 point perspective transforming capabilities, so it was relatively easy to change the perspective of a building and still make it look realistic.

I applied some **photo filters**, and changed the **contrast/brightness** settings to give each building the correct lighting for a picture I had intended to be taken in an evening setting.
Next to give a sense of chaotic motion of life and time Boston has, I applied some motion blur filters to the people crossing the road and added some lighting streaks to create that reckless Boston traffic we’re familiar with.

Then I added some more buildings to the foreground, notably the dome of MIT. I extensively used the warp and free transform tool to get the correct perspective. Also, to improve realism I overlaid two layers of the same Killian Court image and adjusted the position of each slightly to give the image some 3-dimensionality. Using the drop shadow tool helped as well.
Second to last of the major steps, I added the Charles River, applied a purple photo filter, altered its hue, and added our two explorers together with their reflection (motion filter and opacity changes applied) onto the Charles.  

Finally, I added the leaves from the Killian court image I had, changed the hue and saturation to reddish purple, added a bridge in the foreground, the sail boats adjacent to the river (warm filter applied), Quincy Adams’ statue, and a moon with Red Sox faded onto the surface. I used the magic lasso tool to vector mask out parts of the bridge out (as well as almost all the other pictures!), so you could see through the railings, and then used the burn and dodge tool correct shadows and lighting. To give an impression of some depth of field I excessively blurred the first white pillar and railings of the bridge.
The Result One More TIME!:

To finish off, to give the image the look of a canvas painting I lightly applied the angled stroke brushstroke filter to the whole picture...

...Resulting in this!