Pieces

I'm trying to pick up the pieces now -
that's what the idiomatic wisdom of American English calls it -
we pick up the pieces after a loss.

It's a cliché of course,
but that's just it:
What is a cliché, if not a rash bid to pick up a few pieces?

I don't want to just pick up pieces and stack them in a pile, though.
The challenge isn't collection; it's coherence.
What I mean is, nothing quite fits together at the moment.

What happened to the pieces anyways?
Did you smash them when you left?
No, you were never wanton.
And really, no one broke the thing;
It just fell apart.

Perhaps it's that pieces are missing, that you took some with you.
That much is true: there are pieces missing.
Look at this piece, for example: it's edges are empty, and
you can tell just by looking what piece should go there.
I know just the piece.
But I can't pick up that piece.
I can't even find it.

Yes, missing pieces are a problem,
But they aren't *the* problem: a puzzle doesn't fall apart when a few pieces give it a miss.
No, if I have to pick up the pieces, then
It's because you must have held them all together somehow, made the grooves fit, been the principle that binds the knobs and sockets, and made the edges cling onto each other (knowing each that if they did not, they would be lost in the shaking out).
That's the problem: nothing sticks right now;
The pieces are round and smooth as river stones, slick with algae, they slide off each other in the stream.
What I need to know is how to make the pieces stick.

And it's not working just to remember.
It may be that some of the pieces have changed:
That one has sprouted a new loop, and the rest are now all out of order, like a wall with one brick too many.

Or perhaps it's not a piece that has been lost, but that the whole border has changed; perhaps the pieces are the same, but there's no room to fit them anymore.
I will have to find room somewhere,
Clarity.

I don't know how.

But for what it's worth,
I have picked up a few pieces,
like flowers fallen from the stem,
and arranged them in a vase for you.

I.

You, sitting on the porch.
You loved sunlight and warmth, a Mediterranean transplant Down East. When you got them, you could spend hours watching, from their vantage, all the simple offerings of this place.
Leaves shaking, birds overhead, bees drunk with nectar, the yield of the earth -
a wave of blossoms from plant passing to plant, plant with plant bearing in its wake their wilted mass
- the passing of the tides, the turning of the seasons.

And all these performed with splendor for you, most their own under your watchful eye. I wonder how they will do without you to watch them. Will the birds fly without you? Will the flowers bloom? Or the tides change? They will, of course; that's not what's missing. But somehow flowers will not as flowers bloom, nor in their deepest yellows bud; birds will have to find other patterns and steps; and the sea will forget that it flows all the way to the Mediterranean.

II.

Me, five or six, throwing my clothes at you,
Like a menace,
As I ran to take my shower.
You smiled, and hugged me.

III.

Us, in the backyard, building a little fountain and brook.
We didn't know, and would scarcely believe, that in a few years it would be overgrown, the concrete broken, bricks falling off, like a hidden ruin of the jungle.
I suppose I thought we were building Xanadu.

IV.

Us, you reading the Lord of the Rings to me.
Gandalf had just fallen in Moria, and I couldn't believe it, couldn't imagine making do without him, much less going to sleep after that.
But you were merciful, and told me to have hope, that things may not be what they seem.

V.

St. Augustine asks why tears are so sweet to the sorrowful.
He asks if the sweetness springs from the hope God will hear them,
Each tear a message hoping for an answer.

He says no, he did not hope; he simply wept.
And I don't know what I hope for.

Augustine says that each of us is like a word in a sentence; only a piece of the whole, and not itself a whole. He says that anyone who wants to find rest in a word only clasps sorrow to themself.

Why are tears sweet?
I think it is because each tear reflects the whole world.

But St. Augustine says now is not the time to question; now is the time to confess.

VI.

I confess:
I can't make the pieces fit.
I confess:
I found rest in a word.
I confess:
I don't know where to find you.

VII.

Us, in the car, on the way to lunch.
You and Mom are worried about my social skills.
You say, "We'll have to practice small talk." We both sit quietly for a few minutes, trying to think of small talk.
Then we go back to talking about our things: science, humanity, God.

VIII.

Us all, on the beach.
I build sandcastles, and you enjoy the sound of the waves.
We think of popovers to be had.
Remind me to eat one this summer, as you would have suggested:
Extra jam,
And à la mode.

IX.

Me, drinking coffee at the table after breakfast.
You should be arriving, fresh from your shower, any minute now.
This one hasn't happened yet.
I will be missing you, wishing you were there.

X.

You, sitting on the porch again,
Napping in the sun -
I like remembering you here, you see.
As I walk up, you see me,
And smile,
One of those big ones that make your eyes wink shut.
I don't ask for it,

And you don't decide on it.
It just comes over you,
The way blooming comes over a flower.
But there is a difference:
A flower blooms just because it blooms,
Without a why,
And you are smiling because of me.

XI.

I have one more piece.
A piece of you.

> "A House is an ordinary thing but it can also become a home.
> A home is infused with the spirits of those who live there and the memories of those people who lived there before.
> These create a sense of presence that points to Love.
> The Love embraces those who enter the home.
> The house can become the place to which we are called and becomes the place where a family can grow in love.
> It is where we learn what love is and what it is not.
> It is where we first experience love and where we first give it.
> It is the place where we first learn that we are loved.
> Indeed, that we are beloved.
> It is the first place where we find ourselves part of a beloved community.
> A place where we find forgiveness and support when we stumble.
> It is perhaps the first place we've been hurt by someone we love. And then we can learn to forgive.
> It is the place that first leads us to God."

I confess, I cannot pick up the pieces, and, it's true, there's no need to rush.
But I think, I hope, that
Something is coming near to me,
From far away still
Calling in your words,
Something that one by one is
Calling up every piece to itself,
And making them whole,
Just as you called me up into a home.

~ Peter Antich