To Kill A Mockingbird- Jem’s perspective

One day just before the end of school I was getting ready to walk home. It had been a long day, the scrapping of the old teaching techniques had hit me hard and I was struggling to keep up in class. I wasn’t a dumb kid by any means, it was just that the new system they brought in was not to my liking. The walk home is lonely without Scout. She gets to go home thirty minutes before me, lucky thing. It was cloudy today and the air felt heavier than usual as I took a deep breath. I was looking forward to walking in the door, grabbing my book, running up to the tree house and escaping from everything that played on my mind. Up in front of me, the Radley house looked even more threatening today, outlined by the sun behind it casting a large shadow across the lonesome street, creating a momentary patch of shade. The tree that Mr Radley has in his front yard twisted its knotted trunk up to form jagged, bare branches which reminded me of nothing other than death itself.

Even though it was still the tail end of what passes for Spring in Alabama, the path had begun to bake my feet in my polished black shoes. I kept walking along the sidewalk until I finally reached the welcoming gate of home, not so welcoming when I pushed it open, for it burnt my hand as I placed my fingers on the metal latch. My feet burning and my hair and clothes drenched in sweat, I longed for the shade of the porch. Summer was definitely on the way, but even better, Dill was on was on his way too. That old squeaky gate hinge had some competition today, and when I looked up, there was Scout chewing and rocking away on the porch swing for all she was worth, her left cheek bulging out like a lopsided chipmunk.

“What’s that yer got there Scout?”

“Gum,” she said as if she had a mouthful of marbles.

“Where the hell did yew get gum?”

“I foun’ it in the hole in the tree by the Radley place.” Her minty breath wafted over to my nose.

“Why would yew eat somethin’ yew found from the Radley place?! I began to advance on her. “Spit it out right now, Scout!”

She couldn’t have reacted more quickly, launching the contraband across the porch as if it had scalded her mouth. She claimed that she had been chewing on it all afternoon.
“I ain’t dead yet, I ain’t even sick.”

“Yew still shouldn’t touch them trees, yew’ll get killed.”

She argued with me that I had already touched the house but I explained it was different. I felt like shaking her.

“Go gargle right now, yew hear me?”

“No! I ain’t garglin’! It’ll wash out the taste!”

I threatened to tell Cal on her so she ran up to the bathroom quick smart. The old Scout would not have cared if Cal got set off. But since starting school, she seems to be trying a bit harder to behave.

We got out of school early on the last day and Scout and I were walking home together. She hadn’t stopped going on about the knot hole where she’d found the chewing gum and today she was no different. As we approached the Radley’s oaks, Scout raised her finger towards the trees to point out the knot hole for the hundredth time, only this time, a tiny glint caught my eye. “I see it, Scout! I see it!” I made my way over to the knot hole and stuck my hand inside it to feel around. I patted a small square shape that felt like moss covered in foil. I grabbed the object, shoved it in my pocket and signalled to Scout to run for home. We crashed through the gate and leapt up the stairs to the safety of the porch. What I was holding turned out to be a purple velvet jewellery box stuck all over with tin foil chewing-gum wrappers. It had one of the smallest clasps I had ever seen, but I was able to put my finger nail underneath it and, with a triumphant smile, flick it open. Two shiny pennies winked out at us. I knew what they were straight away. “Indian-heads,” I said, turning them over to read the date. “Nineteen-six and, Scout, one of ‘em’s nineteen-hundred. These are real old.” I thought about it for a good two minutes. Who could have possibly left something so valuable, lying in a meaningless, rotting tree? The way they had been polished meant that they sure were special to someone. But why would they hide them there? No one in their right mind would want to swing by the Radley place or mean old Mrs Henry Lafayette Dubose’s residence any more than they’d have to. We sure won the lucky draw living on our street. “Tell you what,” I said. “We’ll keep ‘em till school starts, then go around and ask everybody if they’re theirs.”