

***Chasing Clay* by Lance Charnes**
Discussion Questions

1. Matt engages in extortion and fraud (among other activities) to gain an early end to his federal probation – in essence, to become a legally (if not financially) free man. What incentive would you need to commit a relatively serious non-violent crime? Is committing a crime to stop a crime permissible? Why or why not?
2. Do you think Bandineau or Montford knew what the Nam Ton pottery was being used for before it reached their hands? Did they know about its authenticity? Use examples from the text to support your conclusions.
3. Matt and Savannah take advantage of the pervasive petty corruption in Southeast Asia in order to move freely. If you were in their position, would you pay bribes even though it encourages the corrupt behavior, or would you refuse even if it means more trouble and risk for yourself?
4. Matt tells Savannah (p. 104 in the print edition), “I can’t live in a new house. They have no souls.” He later (p. 105) says in reference to Hoskins’ house, “It has a soul—I needed to save it.” How would you define the soul of a building? Do buildings – especially houses – have souls? If so, are they built in, or do they accrete over time as various owners pass through them?
5. Consider Savannah’s behavior throughout the story. What do you think drives her to do the things she does? Do you consider her a product of her upbringing, or did she create herself? Use examples from the text to support your conclusion.
6. Is it justified for the inheritors of a cultural legacy to profit from it materially – for instance, by selling artifacts from that culture? Why or why not? How else might they benefit from that legacy? Which of those options are feasible for the villagers in this story?
7. Who was your favorite character, and why? Who was your least-favorite character, and why? Who was the strongest character, and what made him/her seem that way to you?
8. If you also read *The Collection* or *Stealing Ghosts*: Describe how you think Matt’s and Carson’s relationship has changed from those stories to this one. Why do you think this change happened? What do you expect of their relationship in future stories?
9. Consider the ending. Do you agree with Matt’s choices? Why or why not? What would you have done differently if you were in his position?
10. With which character do you identify most closely? Why?
11. Did anything happen that surprised you? If so, what and why?