A cunning merchant possessed a shrewd wife, whose wit he admired, and whom he rarely left unattended. One day, compelled by urgent trade matters, he journeyed to a bazaar where exotic creatures were sold and purchased a chameleon. This chameleon not only shifted hues with grace but could mirror the emotions of those nearby, revealing truths through its color. He placed it in a terrarium, instructing his wife to keep it near and observe its hues while he was away. Then he departed. Upon his return, he inquired about the chameleon’s colors, and the creature displayed shades that hinted at deceit.

She suspected one of her servants had betrayed her but learned it was the chameleon, vowing revenge.

When her husband next left for a night, she ordered one servant to place a heated lamp beneath the terrarium; another to fan cold air from above, and a third to spin a kaleidoscope before its eyes, refracting light into prismatic chaos. The servants complied, altering the environment for hours.

The next day, the husband returned and asked the chameleon to display its hues. The creature shimmered in disorienting patterns, its scales flickering like a storm-tossed sea. “My dear master,” it rasped, “the chaos of light and heat has left me disoriented—I cannot discern my own truth.”

The husband, knowing the night had been calm, concluded the chameleon lied, seized it, and cast it into the fire, destroying it. Yet he later discovered the creature’s final colors had been a desperate plea: the servants had confessed their deception.