The Rivals:
A Giant Panda Story
It was a bright, cold morning in the bamboo forest. Bo, a giant panda, was walking among the tall plants. She was five years old: a young adult. Her black and white fur stood out against the greens, yellows and browns of the forest. She moved slowly, and not particularly gracefully, using her big body to push her way through the thick shoots.

Another panda was sitting against a tree, watching Bo approach. Her name was Lian. She was the same age as Bo, but the two were not friends. When Bo came close Lian rose to her feet and growled a warning.

Bo ignored the other panda. She had come to this part of the forest to remind Lian whose territory it was. She didn’t want Lian wandering over and taking her bamboo whenever she pleased.

Bo grabbed a bamboo shoot and sat down. She started to eat, using her powerful teeth to tear strips from the tough plant.

Lian sat down too, and continued to watch Bo as she ate. Lian sat at the very edge of where her territory bordered Bo’s.

Finally, Lian spoke. ‘Hello Bo! Aren’t you going to say anything to your old friend?’

Since the two pandas had become old enough to have territories of their own, they had bickered continuously over who owned this part of the forest.

Bo looked at the other panda for the first time. ‘Hello, Lian,’ she said. ‘I’m just making sure that you’re not coming into my territory.’

Lian laughed. ‘Why would I want to go over there? I’ve got more bamboo here!’

‘No you haven’t,’ replied Bo. ‘And what you have got is thick and tough. It grows better here!’
‘Ha! In your dreams!’ said Lian. ‘It’s you who should stay away! Just remember that anything past that tree is mine!’

Lian pointed to an old tree that marked the boundary between their territories. Its bark was worn where generations of pandas had rubbed against it while scent marking their domains.

Bo didn’t believe that Lian would stay where she was. The other panda had always been envious of her territory. Why else was Lian here this morning?

The pandas were now sitting facing each other. Occasionally one of them would get up to fetch more bamboo, but they would always return to the same spot. Neither of them spoke. Both of them would have preferred to be somewhere else, but neither wanted to be the first to leave.

As the morning drew on, the silence became more and more awkward. Both pandas were getting very bored of just sitting watching each other.

Friendly Cheng

They were both grateful when they heard another panda approaching. They were even happier to see it was Cheng, a friendly old panda from another part of the forest. He regularly passed through the area, and both of the younger pandas enjoyed his company. Unlike most pandas, he had travelled far and had many adventures. His stories were famous throughout the forest.

‘Hello, Bo, hello Lian!’ he said as he approached. ‘What a lovely day it is! Spring will soon be here!’

Bo and Lian both greeted him, but then returned to their silent face-off. Cheng knew that the pandas were not friends, and immediately worked out what was going on.

‘It’s so nice to see you both sitting here together! What are you talking about?’

He waited for either of them to answer. Neither of them spoke.

End of sample.
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