



**Packard, Albert**  
**CAVERN OF BABEL**  
Illus. by Shawn Boyles  
Diamond Triple C Ranch  
(186 pp.)  
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A cute, well-written and suspenseful animal-adventure story.

The heroine, Buttersby, is a dominant alpaca who reigns over her Virginia ranch. Since she has won many championship ribbons, she has become, simply put, a self-centered snob. After being kidnapped along with Meander, a male alpaca whom Buttersby scorns no matter how often he helps her, she arrives in Peru among alpacas who refuse to acknowledge her superiority. As such, the outraged Buttersby finds herself at the bottom of the social system, and she's sent into the jungle with a quest: to find the legendary cave of the alpaca ancestors, aided by a prophetic mouse, ancient Vicunas and the trusty Meander. Told entirely from the alpacas' point of view, the story zips along in short chapters adorned with illustrations as whimsical as the narrative, and young readers will recognize Buttersby's failings in her well-drawn character. Most memorable, though, is the confident, wise-cracking Meander, who sticks by Buttersby despite her disdain. Packard

displays a good feel for both comedy and suspense. Though the kidnapping is never fully explained, and though it may be difficult to understand why the conceited Buttersby would be the chosen one, *Cavern of Babel* is a charming, enjoyable read.

Readers will have fun and learn a great deal about alpacas. Well-done. (*Fiction. 8-12*)

