



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH REGINA JENNINGS



At Love's Bidding

by Regina Jennings

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1. Tell us about *At Love's Bidding*.

At Love's Bidding is the story of a Boston art appraiser who works in her family's auction house. Miranda Wimplegate loves handling the beautiful objects that come through their office, but when a family heirloom of a wealthy customer goes missing, the family's livelihood is endangered. Miranda and her grandfather track the painting down to the Missouri Ozarks and make an outlandish offer to buy the local auction house if they'll promise not to sell anything until they arrive.

What they don't know is that the auction house doesn't deal in fine art, it deals in livestock. And its manager, ruggedly handsome Wyatt Ballentine, is frustrated to discover his fussy new bosses don't know a thing about the business he's single-handedly kept afloat. Faced with more cattle than they can count—but no mysterious painting—Miranda and Wyatt form an unlikely but charged partnership to try and salvage a bad situation getting worse.

2. What's different about this romance?

Miranda is very class conscious, as she's been forced to remember her station as she deals with her wealthy clients in Boston. Wyatt has always lived in the mountains, and although he'd be completely lost in Miranda's world, he doesn't think he's any man's inferior. Poor Miranda feels obligated to educate him on his place in the world—a place which happens to be somewhere below hers—while at the same time wishing she wasn't bound by those same limits.

Also, this story has a strong mystery running throughout it. Who has the missing painting and what's its significance? The answer to that could change everything for Wyatt and Miranda.

3. So this is an auction story? What's so great about an auction?

There's nothing like a live auction, especially when the stakes are high. My grandpa owned a couple of auction houses in Missouri, and growing up I was a frequent guest. My dad also made his living as a livestock dealer. He bought hogs at auctions and, when he opened his own buying station, I jumped in to help with bookkeeping and running the scales.

More recently, we bought our house at an auction. Those bids were coming so fast. My heart was pounding. Just a few more bids and it'd be out of our price range, but then everything stopped, the seconds stretched out...and no one else bid. We got the house. It was quite a dramatic moment.

4. So you already knew about auctions. What else did you research for this story?

Like Wyatt, I know about livestock auctions, but I had to brush up on my antiques so I could adequately describe the pieces that Miranda worked with in Boston. I dug out my art appreciation books from college and watched *Antiques Roadshow* every chance I got.

Another fun topic I researched was phrenology. For those who aren't familiar with nineteenth-century quack-medicine, a phrenologist supposedly could tell everything about a person's character by feeling the shape and lumps on their skull. As you can imagine, that was a hoot to study, and even more fun to create a character who is constantly sharing his science.

But now I find myself gazing in wonder at bare heads. Is that a bad thing?

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