

## 3.2 EDIT A STORY

**EXERCISE:** Harrower says “all stories are cuttable.” Below is a story that editors have sent forward for publication. It’s late at night and due to a late-breaking story, you’re faced with cutting some of the story to make it fit. Number each of the paragraphs with 1 being the most important, and therefore least cuttable, and 27 the least important and therefore most likely to be cut first.

Every Friday night, it’s the same ol’ thing. A man walks into a bar (no joke) and sits down waiting for the woman of his dreams to walk through the door.

A month of Fridays ago, for pig farmer Joshua Harrell, it was more than a dream.

“It had been a long week,” Harrell recalled. “I had been working on the farm all day and probably smelled like pigs. I just had to take a break.”

So, as part of his weekly ritual, Harrell joined his buddies at Mitch’s Bar & Grill, a local watering hole where farmers hang out, playing pool, watching races on television and talking about the drought or new legislation regarding hog waste.

This particular Friday night, however, was special. Harrell’s friends didn’t show up.

“I guess they all had better offers,” he said.

Then in walked Laura White.

“I’ll never forget that moment,” Harrell, recently divorced. “She just looked magical.”

And White, now, Mrs. Harrell, shared in the magic although she’s kept her maiden name.

“He was just glowing,” she said after returning from the honeymoon in Cancun. “I don’t remember how he smelled, but he sure looked like he needed someone to talk to.”

The two hit it off right away. Both were hog farmers who practice environmentally friendly and humane farming practices.

The two had known of each other and had even met at community meetings regarding the humane treatment of pigs and how to deal with problems regarding animal waste.

“We don’t use group-housing or straw-lined sheds. Our pigs are free-roaming. It’s a lot more expensive than what the other farmers do, so it costs us a lot more money to raise one pig. But the meat tastes a lot better,” he said.

But it wasn’t those common ideals that brought them together. It was pure chance.

“She didn’t know I was going to be there, and I didn’t know she was going to be there. But it sure was fun hanging out.”

Harrell said he even remembers their first conversation in the middle of that hot, dry summer.

“We talked about the stress the pigs were under due to the heat,” he said. “Most domestic pig varieties are susceptible to heat stress. Pigs lack sweat glands and cannot cool themselves so they have a limited tolerance to high temperatures and heat stress can lead to death.”

Neither one of them lost any pigs that summer. But they did continue to go out — every Friday night.

After about six months, Harrell’s buddies decided their “guys night out” needed to turn into a “family night” for the benefit of the ladies. So, the first Friday of every month was designed “family night.” The second “guys night out.” And the third “girls night out.”

“We had a good thing going,” Jamie Gilbert, Josh’s best man at the wedding, said. “But it got even better after Josh started going out with Laura. We all share so many common interests that sometimes we’ll go hunting together, sometimes we’ll go fishing and sometimes we just hang out.”

In keeping with a theme, a surprise guest joined the couple on their honeymoon, Hurricane Dan.

“They tried to evacuate the tourists,” Harrell said. “But we wouldn’t leave.”

White said it was their midwestern stubbornness that kept them there.

“I had never seen the ocean, and I wasn’t going to let some little windstorm scare me away.”

Dan came onshore south of Cancun as a Category 5 storm. Cancun saw little more than rain and some winds.

“They opened shelters and everything, but we just sat in our hotel and watched movies — until the power went out,” White said.

It was just like a Friday night back on the farm. ■