

Tough Love in 1978

by Ann Bogle

It jars one to have heard of one. It jars the literary nerves to see Gertrude Stein's name in a short story, as if characters do not think of her yet have heard of her. It jars one to leave the door to the past ajar. Most people would like to shove it afoot to avoid incriminating someone, though by incriminate they do not mean criminal. If they mean law, they mean of right and wrong or civil law. People would rather fire the spiritual-not-religious decree, "Evil!" The world is round and evil not illegal. A lot of Americans are in jail or unable to forget jail. The society leaves that door to the past agape. And never hires ex-prisoners or their kin or ex-girlfriends or second wives, even one admitted to medical school twice with half-funding. Too white. Caucasian, she would say, beige, a too late that started early. The secret government may run her like a pellet through birdshot fire at anyone where everyone is a bread basket or hooligan. He was in prison because he owned a gun then sold it. The gun fired accidentally during cleaning and blew the strings of a harpsichord. It was not stolen, he emphasized. It had no serial number. He met with belief and the desire to lock him away. He was seventeen. He gave no names. The names would have been Mexican. His parents granted him fallen love without a lawyer.

