

LIAR'S DICE



a novel

Juliet Faithfull

BOOK CLUB KIT



author letter

Dear reader,

I am so thrilled to share with you my debut novel, *Liar's Dice*. Set in 1970s Brazil, Dolores, an illiterate twelve-year old girl, wakes up one day to find her disabled twin sister gone, sent away to an institution. She resolves to do whatever it takes—lie, cheat, steal, and even learn to read and write—to get her sister back.

The theme of literacy is personal. My mother is illiterate, and I only learned to read and write when I was ten. This novel is a testament to the transformative power of books.

Like the protagonist of *Liar's Dice*, I too had an identical twin sister with cerebral palsy, who was institutionalized when we were young. At the time, doctors often recommended this as the best “solution.” I wanted to put someone like my twin, Margarita, on the page and in the world, instead of hiding her away.

I have complete amnesia of my years living with my twin, so fiction is not only a choice but a necessity. I have made those years up in order to have them back. The Santanésia chapters where Mita is still relatively healthy were the hardest to write.

Ideally, this novel will spark conversations about our history of institutionalizing children with disabilities and allow for a thawing of the frozen grief that often surrounds their stories.

But *Liar's Dice* is not only about the deep connection of identical twins and the cost of institutionalization. During her journey to reunite with her sister, the brave, defiant Dolores discovers so much more: A bookstore with a secret room for banned and censored music and books. The French poems that heal her dear friend Sofia, a trans sex worker tortured by police. The love and support of her found family, who live in Rio's dangerous red-light district. A fashion show that becomes an act of resistance. A family that finally comes together to grieve.

Most of all, my hope is that anyone who has—or loves someone with—a disability can find themselves in the pages of this book.

Warmly,

Tuliet Faithfull





discussion questions

1. Dolores often describes Mita as both “there and not there.” How does this idea shape the way we understand Mita throughout the novel?
2. How does Dolores’s struggle with reading and language mirror her emotional struggle to understand and express what’s happening to Mita?
3. How does the novel capture the feeling of growing up—especially when things don’t go the way you expect?
4. Dolores carries a deep sense of responsibility for Mita. Where do you see that guilt come from—and do you think it’s justified?
5. How does the book portray the experience of loving someone whose condition is changing in ways you can’t control?
6. Dolores’s letters play an important role in how she processes her feelings and tries to stay connected to Mita. What do the letters reveal about her, and how did they shape your understanding of their relationship?
7. In what ways does the political backdrop—the dictatorship, censorship, and atmosphere of fear—shape the characters’ lives, even when it’s not the central focus?
8. What roles do Dolores’s friendships, especially with Andrea and Sofia—play in Dolores’s understanding of identity, freedom, and risk?
9. What did you think about the way the book portrays family—both its strengths and its limitations?
10. How did the ending make you feel, and what stayed with you after you finished the book?



Behind the Silence

Brazil in the Years of Lead

Liar's Dice unfolds in 1970s Brazil, during a period known as the Years of Lead—the most repressive phase of the country's military dictatorship (1964–1985). While Dolores's story is intimate and personal, it takes place within a broader climate of censorship, surveillance, and quiet fear.

For many who grew up during this time, repression was part of daily life—yet often went unnamed. Children and adolescents moved through a world shaped by secrecy, where certain truths were understood but rarely spoken aloud. Families, like governments, learned to maintain appearances.

A Culture of Silence

Under military rule, political dissent was dangerous. Arrests, disappearances, and torture were widespread, though not always visible. Many families avoided discussing politics altogether, even within their own homes.

In the novel, this silence echoes through Dolores's life. She senses that things are being hidden from her—about the world, and about her sister—but struggles to access the full truth.

What Was Hidden, What Was Known

It was not until decades later, with the release of Brazil's National Truth

Commission report in 2014, that the full extent of state violence became widely documented. The report confirmed systematic human rights abuses, including torture and the targeting of marginalized groups.

This history informs elements of the novel, particularly in the character of Sofia, whose experiences reflect the heightened vulnerability of those living outside social norms during the dictatorship.

A Country of Contradictions

At the same time, 1970s Brazil projected an image of vibrancy and success. This period included the so-called “Brazilian Miracle,” marked by rapid economic growth and a flourishing cultural scene—Carnaval, Bossa Nova music, and global icons like Pelé.

This contrast—between outward celebration and underlying repression—shapes the world Dolores inhabits. Beauty, order, and social performance often mask deeper tensions, both within her family and in the country around her.



Playlist

Music moves quietly through *Liar's Dice*—from the rhythms of childhood and Carnival to songs of longing, memory, and resistance. This playlist gathers the specific songs and traditional melodies that appear in the novel, offering a way to step more deeply into Dolores and Mita's world.

Cai, Cai Balão

Brazilian Children's Song

Mamãe Eu Quero

Carmen Miranda

Atirei o Pau no Gato

Brazilian Children's Song

Andança

Beth Carvalho

Boi da Cara Preta

Brazilian Children's Song

Asa Branca

Luiz Gonzaga

Mais Que Nada

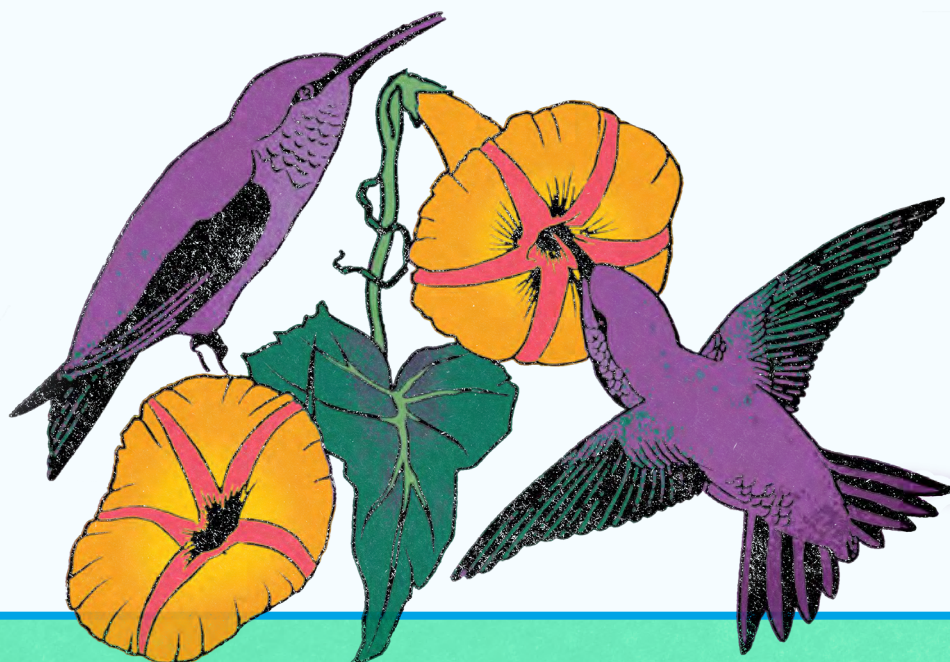
Jorge Ben Jor

Madalena

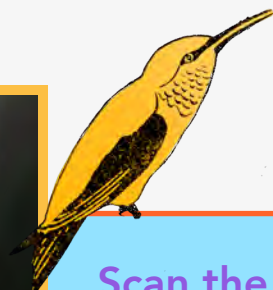
Elis Regina (or Ivan Lins version)

Apesar de Você

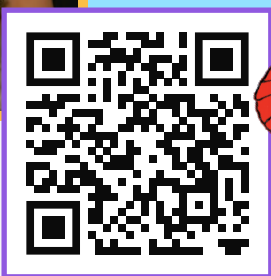
Chico Buarque



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