

Something happens. Then there are consequences.

We cannot look away.

There are consequences. Then we react.

We may look away.

Or we may not—I do not know.

We start to act. *Then* there are consequences.

A coincidence occurred, and I'm going to write about it. I do not like the tag "3/11." Because it is too much like a sign or symbol, as if something were being trivialized. What happened on that day, and what's been happening ever since, are not signs to be consumed—at least that's how I feel. Yet I know that everything will always be classified under the label "3/11," and I accept it as inevitable. Therefore I am also aware, however unwillingly, of its connection with "9/11": of the great similarity between the two figures, of the meaning generated by *dates*, by the fact the second tragedy occurred exactly six months (and one decade) later.

It had been arranged late last year that I would take a trip to New York City at the end of April, 2011. My work as a writer made it necessary for me to travel across the ocean: simply as a Japanese artist when the arrangement was made, but in the universe after "3/11" as a Japanese artist from Fukushima. I knew I had to see the site of "9/11" while I was in New York. On the afternoon of May 1, local time, speaking to an acquaintance, I announced, "I'm going to Ground Zero tomorrow." In the evening of the same day, the death of Osama bin Laden was reported. I am told that there was a huge crowd cheering *USA! USA!* at the "9/11" site that night. The mood began to change the next day, becoming something quite different than simple exultation. I was present at Ground Zero during that phase.

And I thought: Americans have an emblem, a symbolic representation, of their enemies. It was something killable. We, on the other hand, have no such emblem for our "3/11." Is this a bad thing? Something hard to take? Or could it just be that, because we have no symbol representing our enemies—because we have no enemies, period—we are *absolvable*?

New York City was an area struck by disaster. Each area in Japan has been struck in its own way, and there are no enemies, even though we feel greatly tempted to invent some. Others may feel differently, but I want to absolve. To absolve even this huge tragedy, and ultimately be myself absolved, of being here, living here. That's all I can say, finally. One coincidence forced me to think: *What does this mean? What does this coincidence mean?* This is my answer.