What a night. It was all so unreal. Coming home from the hospital with the city lights twinkling in place of the stars way up above the buildings that I couldn't see and that couldn't see me. All the people behind all those lights going on with their lives while I stood outside anyone's reality, just waiting, waiting and watching. And starting to fast in the hospital waiting room on challah brought from home and on hot, salty turkey sandwiches from the hospital's cafeteria.

I wonder what God's thinking. Or does he care? Funny, I'm really not hungry. Ashamnu, bagadnu, gazalnu... What did my grandmother do? Nothing so terrible. She was a good grandmother. Wear a scarf. Call me when you get home. Mame shayne. This is all so unreal.

Amidah. What am I asking for? This is crazy. Who are you to sit in judgment on my grandmother? She made mistakes? So? Don't we all? I don't believe this. Sit down.

Yom Kippur continued around me. Sounding of the shofar, sound of the return to Nill (yoke of the commanments) and to God. My grandmother can't hear it. How about you returning to her, God? Nor could she hear the silence in her room broken by her breathing or by her doctors. Or me. Nor could she hear me. Or feel me when I touched her arm, her body bloated, all the wrinkles stretched taut, her face and arm smooth where once her age had shown. Her body that held the aches of a lifetime -- pogroms, her mother's death, the Holocaust, leaving home and starting over. She'd gone through Jewish history and survived. She was strong. Couldn't she make it through this, too?

But her body lay there, her mind -- where? And I thought back to Rosh Hashana, the shofar call from mountain-top to mountaintop, from city to city, uniting Jews and announcing the New Moon, and in my house the calls from one to another, "I love you" as we all sat together and ate, celebrating together birthdays, a 55th wedding anniversary, and the New Year.

New Year.

This is sweet?

Tish'a Y'may T'shuva, huh? What happened to the tenth day? You couldn't wait? So there she lies. What are you weighing? Her merit? Her worth? I can tell you what she's worth. She's worth a couple of Abrahams and Sarahs; she got her child out of Poland alive without your help and she doesn't laugh at you behind closed doors. She's worth some Ya'akovs; she can see beyond externals and love someone for what's inside. She's worth a couple of Moshes; she's not afraid to speak up and out and do what's right. She's worth all the Jews in Egypt; she never forgot you. She is loving, caring, sweet, gentle, intelligent, and educated —You don't care? That doesn't count?

Ashamnu again? Why should I ask you for forgiveness? And God, impassive. And my grandmother, unmoving. When is it going to end? Don't just sit there!

Is this what you call "b'sefer chayim"? Who is like you,

Av Harachamim?

And as the last blast of Ne'ila died out, the beep matching my grandmother's heartbeat began a long, slow wail. Kaddish.

May her name be blessed for now and forever.