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Dog Dies In East Village Apartment Fire After Couple Wins Court Case Against Landlord



East Village couple Adam Berk and Karen Kushkin were out celebrating a \$2,850 default judgment against their landlord, Steven Croman, of Croman Realty, in January when someone broke into their ground floor apartment, burglarized it, and set it on fire. Their

beloved Labrador, Foster, died a week later as a result of smoke inhalation, and although the couple isn't directly accusing Croman of arson, [they tell the Post](#) he still deserves the blame.

In February, detectives arrested "career criminal" Jorge Molina after he was caught using a credit card stolen from the apartment. He pleaded guilty to criminal possession of stolen property in June, but investigators were unable to prove that he started the blaze. But Berk tells the tabloid, "**I blame the criminal the least; I blame Croman most of all.**" The couple had been locked in a bitter legal dispute with Croman Realty in the months leading up to the fire; at issue, apparently, was Croman's refusal to lock two doors that allowed easy access to their back yard.

They happened to be out celebrating the small claims ruling in their favor on the night of the burglary and arson, the Post reports. They've since moved into a new apartment and gotten a new dog, and say they're considering filing a civil lawsuit against Croman Realty. Croman isn't commenting, but the property manager says the couple was to blame for allegedly leaving a window ajar the night of the break-in. You may recall that [Croman bought the Amato Opera](#) on the Bowery back in 2009 for \$3.7 million, or \$681 per square-foot.

Contact the [author](#) of this article or email tips@gothamist.com with further questions, comments or tips. By [John Del Signore](#) in [News](#) on July 25, 2011 9:59 AM [6](#)

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~~Steven Croman is a fucking asshole, and he will die a second death in Hell.~~

EDIT: eh, i still have to be nice (for now), but the time is coming (when i don't have to be so nice).

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david cohen

I used to Live in a Croman building - i heard all the urban legends about his harassment but we never had a problem. I think he calmed down after Sheldon Silver made an example of him.

[11 months ago](#)

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canofpeas

So a landlord probably paid some lowlife to set a revenge fire in a tenants apartment; that's never happened before.

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splicernyc Top 50

Sick.

11 months ago

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jfu222

killed a pooch man ... makes my blood boil.

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Pet Fire Alert

What a terribly sad story! And the dog suffered for a week from the smoke inhalation before passing on--poor thing! Their lungs are small, so it's important to rescue them quickly.

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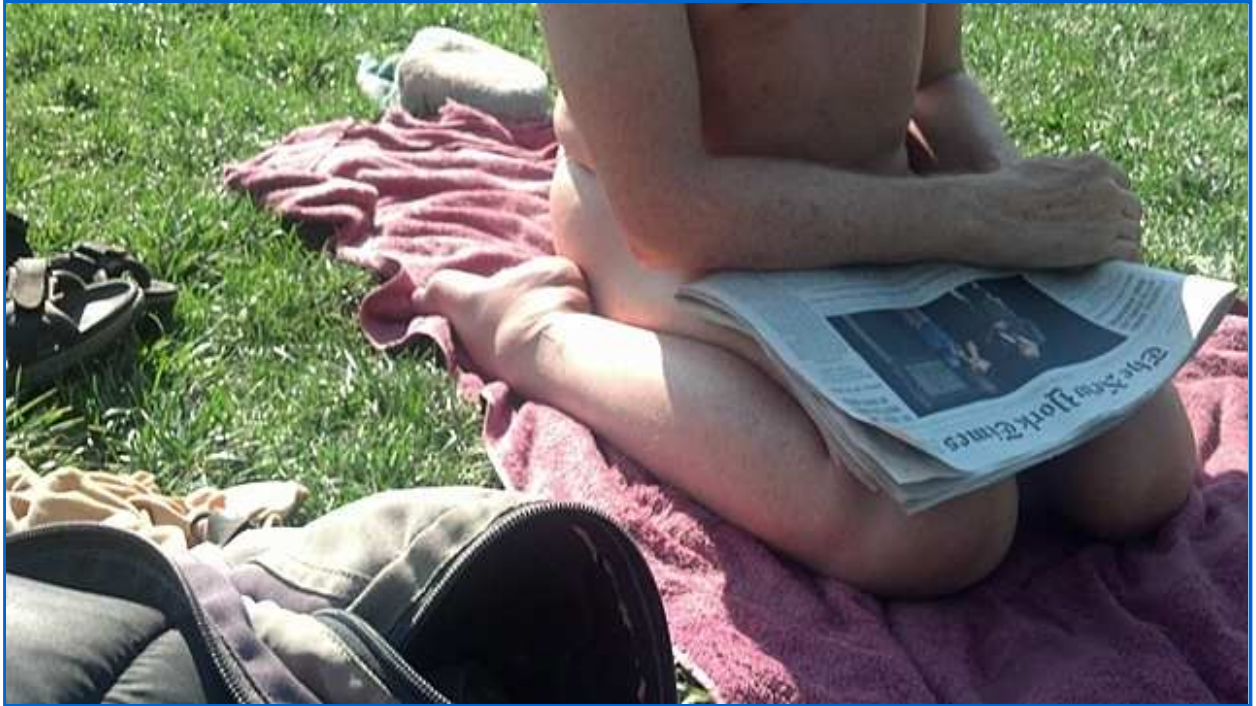


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