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BY BARBARA ROSS AND DAVE GOLDNER

Elaine Kaufman is off the hook.

Prosecutors will drop criminal charges against the East Side celebrity den mother when she appears to face accusations that she scratched a Tennessee man's face during a scrap in her eatery.

"We've interviewed a number of witnesses, and we can't prove a criminal case," said Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau.

Kaufman, 69, was taken from her Second Ave. restaurant in handcuffs April 4 after James Sorrels complained she attacked and verbally abused him.

Sorrels, an industrial-lighting salesman, and his girlfriend said Kaufman went off on them because weren't drinking enough just a single Tanqueray and tonic.

They said she called them "unemployed white trash."

When Sorrels returned to fetch a jacket, he scuffled with Kaufman, who allegedly scratched him.

Kaufman said Sorrels called her a pig and stomped on her foot. When she tried to push him away himself on her ring, she said.

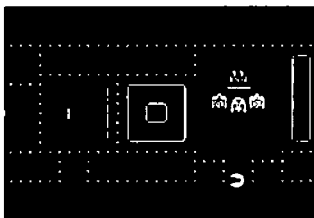
After the barroom brouhaha, Kaufman hired attorneys Ronald Fischetti and Mark Freyberg to defend a dejected Sorrels sounded resigned to the fact that the well-connected Elaine was not destined

"You can't fight City Hall," he said last night.

Although Kaufman will not face criminal charges, the Battle of Yorkville could still cost her Sorrels a million suit, claiming injuries, mental anguish and defamation.

Elaine's regulars include Woody Allen, Leonardo DiCaprio, Kim Basinger and Alec Baldwin.

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