

# Online game theft earns real-world conviction

31 January 2012

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(AP) -- The amulet and mask were a 13-year-old boy's virtual possessions in an online fantasy game. In the real world, he was beaten and threaten with a knife to give them up.

The Dutch Supreme Court on Tuesday upheld the theft conviction of a youth who stole another boy's [possessions](#) in the popular online fantasy game RuneScape. Judges ordered the offender to perform 144 hours of community service.

Only a handful of such cases have been heard in the world, and they have reached varying conclusions about the legal status of "virtual goods" - and whether stealing them is real-world theft.

The suspect's lawyer had argued the amulet and mask "were neither tangible nor material and, unlike for example electricity, had no [economic value](#)."

But the Netherlands' highest court said the [virtual objects](#) had an [intrinsic value](#) to the 13-year-old gamer because of "the time and energy he invested" in winning them while playing the game.

The court did not release the offender's name, only his year of birth - 1992. It said he and another youth beat and kicked the boy and threatened him with a knife until he logged into RuneScape and dropped the objects in 2007.

One of the [thieves](#), who was also playing the game, was then able to pick up the items, making them his virtual property. Both were convicted by a lower court in 2009, but only one of them had appealed to the Supreme Court.

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