

## World of warcraft gold

Zhang Bin, a resident of Ningbo, in Zhejiang Province, began selling online game accounts on the Internet in February 2005. Among his customers was a man surnamed Shen, who bought an account for 4,800 yuan. Several days later, Shen discovered that his account had been embezzled, and reported it to the police. They investigated and concluded that the thief was none other than Zhang himself. After being convicted, Zhang was sentenced to one year in prison and given a 5,000-yuan fine, along with a two-year suspended sentence, by the Ningbo Haishu District Court.

In recent years, the [world of warcraft gold](#) growing number of "virtual property" disputes has aroused much public discussion, particularly the question of whether virtual property can be treated the same as real assets. Some Internet users who have been victims of virtual property theft have turned to the court for rulings that virtual theft can be punished in the [world of warcraft gold](#) real world.

In prosecuting the Zhang case, the Ningbo Haishu District Procuratorate said that virtual, or online, property is equivalent to real belongings and can be transferred either free of charge or for payment without damaging its value. Thus, stealing virtual property is a crime.

Going to court

In 2003, an online game player who lost "weapons" and "treasure" in the virtual world turned to the [world of warcraft gold](#) court for help and won China's first virtual property dispute case.

Li Hongchen, a 24-year-old company employee in north China's Hebei Province, had spent two years and over 10,000 yuan playing the game Red Moon and purchasing virtual "biochemical weapons." However, he found all his "weapons" had been stolen in February 2003 and were allegedly being used by another player with the online ID "Shuilu0011."

Li first asked the game operator to identify the player who was suspected of stealing the items and close his account, but the company refused, saying it could not disclose players' personal information, which is regarded as private.

Li then resorted to the [world of warcraft gold](#) police, but got no assistance. So he took his case to court, demanding 10,000 yuan in compensation. The Beijing Chaoyang District Court ruled that the online game company, Beijing Arctic Ice Technology Development Co. Ltd., should restore Li's lost items.

Li Junhui, a researcher of Internet law at the China University of Political Science and Law, pointed out that most of the earlier virtual property disputes followed the same settlement pattern of civil action, that is, the [world of warcraft gold](#) operator restored the [world of warcraft gold](#) player's lost items. Recently, however, several cases had involved criminal actions, with the perpetrators being convicted of theft. This represents a big change from the past in recognizing the legal existence of virtual property, Li said.

At this point, China has not promulgated any specific laws on virtual property. As a result, many owners of lost property have no idea where to turn for help. Law enforcement agencies also have difficulties in dealing with such cases.

According to Yang Huibo, a lawyer at the Julong Law Firm in Guangdong Province, virtual property theft can be treated as a crime under the current Criminal Law, but two conditions must be met. One is that the victim must prove ownership of the lost property, and the other is that he or she must prove that the property has been stolen. Once the [world of warcraft gold](#) suspect is found, he or she can be tried in court.