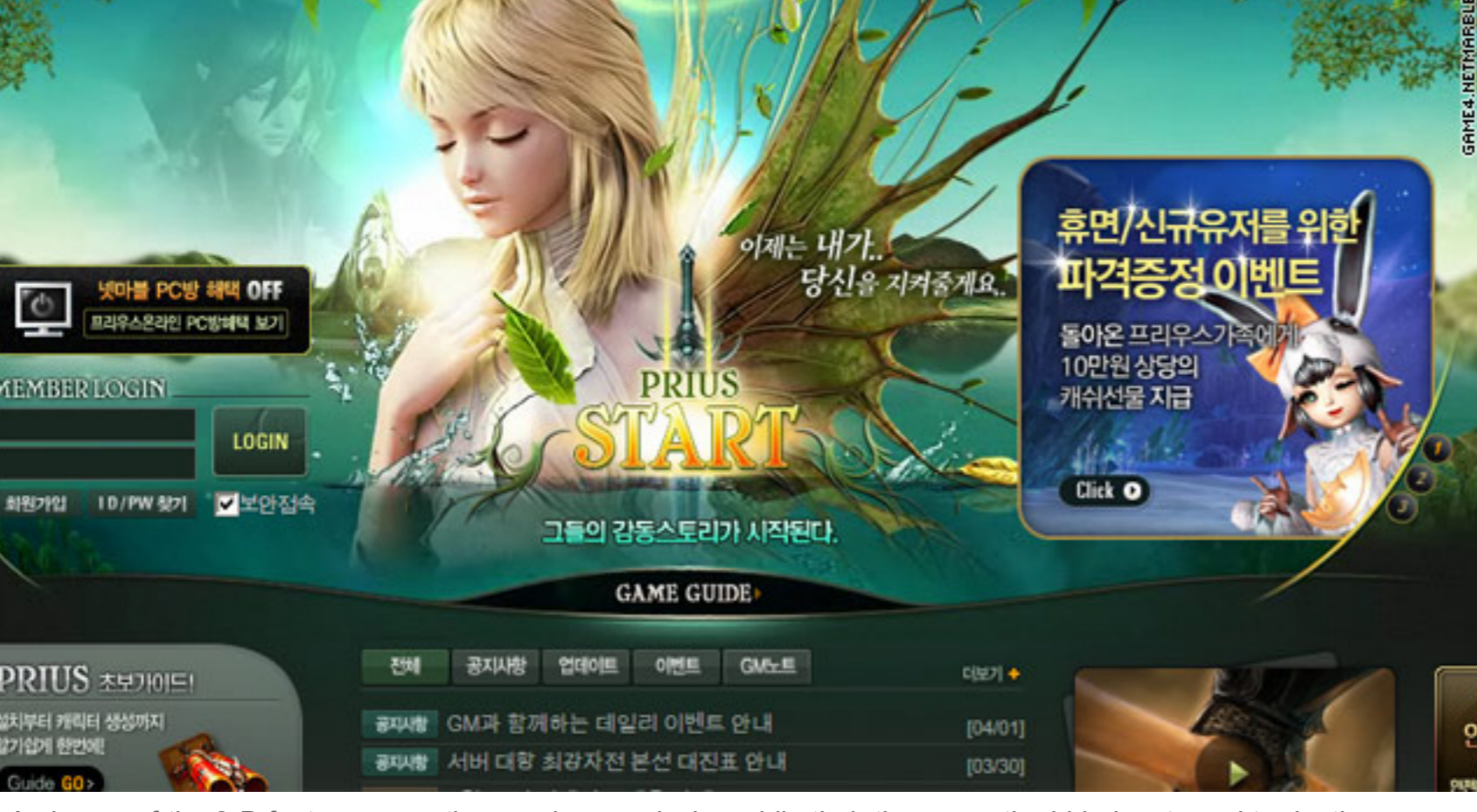


Feedback

Jail for couple whose baby died while they raised online child

By **Andrew Salmon**. For CNN
May 28, 2010 -- Updated 1146 GMT (1946 HKT)



An image of the 3-D fantasy game the couple was playing while their three-month old baby starved to death.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Couple's baby starved to death while they raised a virtual child
- Court hands out two-year sentence; mother's suspended
- Couple is expecting another child in August
- Internet gaming popular in South Korea, home to 21,500 Internet cafes

Seoul, South Korea (CNN) -- A couple whose baby starved to death while they raised a virtual child in an online fantasy game was sentenced Friday, their defense attorney said.

Prosecutors at Suwon District Court had sought a five-year sentence for negligent homicide, but the court handed out a two-year sentence.

Sentence was suspended for the female defendant, Kim Yun-jeong, 25, who is expecting the couple's daughter in August. Her partner, Kim Jae-beom, 41, will serve two years.

The unmarried couple's defense attorney said he was satisfied with the sentence.

"This is the first legal case regarding Internet addiction in Korea," said Kim Dong-young, a lawyer with the Korean Legal Aid Corp. "I am pleased that the female defendant's Internet addiction was taken into consideration, and she was bailed."

Three-month-old Kim Sa-rang died of malnutrition in September while her parents were engaged in 12-hour sessions of Prius Online. In the 3-D fantasy game, players nurture an online girl who gains magical powers as she grows.

Kim's mother is a former factory worker while her father is a taxi and truck driver.

During their trial, the court heard that the toddler weighed 6.4 pounds (2.9 kgs) when she was born, but was only 5.5 pounds (2.5 kgs) at the time of her death.

The trial was in March, but sentencing was delayed after the court requested a psychological examination of the mother. Both defendants appeared contrite during the trial, with the mother frequently breaking down in tears.

Internet gaming is hugely popular in South Korea, with some 21,500 "PC Bangs" -- or Internet cafes -- offering ultra-high speed Internet connections nationwide.

The case has highlighted the dark side of the nation's Internet, an industry touted by South Korean officials as cutting edge. A public debate is under way in the nation over online privacy and regulating Internet rumors.

There is particular concern about gaming addiction and its effects on teenagers and those estranged from mainstream society. "Consequently, it comes as no surprise to me that two people who were disconnected from society in general found a common psychological space that kept them physically and socially divorced from reality," said Tom Coyner, Seoul-based author of "Mastering Business in Korea."

Suwon, the satellite town south of Seoul where the tragedy occurred, was named "Intelligent City of the Year" this month by a New York-based think-tank Intelligent Community Forum.

The honor was awarded because of the town's investment in broadband infrastructure and its push to increase connection speeds to 1 gigabyte per second, according to reports.

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BewdyCall No way! Seriously? There are people THAT stupid???? Don't tell me - they get to eat their virtual steak and virtual mashed potatoes while they raise their virtual children? Good grief, those idiots deserve to starve ...

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Suqatish Oh my God. I play video games. I even played World of Warcraft. I stopped because it started cutting into my social activities.

I mean, holy ****. How the hell do people become this addicted to GRINDFEST games? Meth addicts know better than to let their baby go hungry.

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lyrker 1) Thank gawd. I only wish their sentence was longer. I think they should be forced to give up the baby she's pregnant with 2) Didja see the age differences? 16 years apart. When she was 18 he was 34. Robbing the cradle much? 3) Two years might be long enough for their internet child to die too. I ho... more

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PCwriter 1) I agree with you on that...even go as far as to ban her from ever having children until she gets help. 2) Since when age is a factor on who a person sleeps with? Sex/love is still sex/love if they were 1 year apart or 25 yrs apart. Jealous much? 3) Unfortunately, they can always start playing all ov... more

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geoalks They should also be banned from the internet for life.

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Elitesack they need to get a job and get off of welfare/parents more than go to jail. scum.

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katsrude And she is pregnant again? They have time to have sx, but no time to take care of a baby?

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EXMARINENYC7 I meant that comment for "newdna" who wanted to have an internet argument with me.

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EXMARINENYC7 Settle down Beavis.

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BuckeyeBob Wow - these freaks kill their child by playing video games - she gets knocked up again, avoids any jail time or repercussions ruling this infant. The sperm donor gets 2 whole years for this crime. That is one strange strange rulering

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6294ns Death? No. The worst torture for these people would be locked in a cell with nothing but reality staring them in the face. No TV, no books, no internet.

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EXMARINENYC7 Condemn them the dial-up speed access only for the rest of their worthless and undeserving lives. I'm not joking. The woman shouldn't be allowed anywhere near children also.

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MediaBluff Oh what a world we live in....

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EXMARINENYC7 This...would be some what funny to laugh about except that the victim is a baby, the most innocent and the most deserving to live the life and that... was usurped away from this precious human being by these monsters. They both deserve a 50 caliber round in the back of their worthless head.

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PSAGuy The whole world has lost it's goofy mind !! I hear there is now some farming game where people actually pay money (real money) for fake (oh...sorry, "VIRTUAL") land and livestock. Are you kidding me ?? Suckers !!!

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Jayberdz They need counseling as they serve their life sentences in prison. A baby is dead. Ignored by its parents.

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Macol life sentence? did you even read this article, or did you just want to see your words on this page?

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HGrrr These people need counseling, not jail time.

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PSAGuy Counseling ??? Again....gimme a break. Today the counselors are goofier than the people they counsel !!

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slozomby they let their own child starve to death. they deserve the same treatment.

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neverquit Forget counseling...these people should be locked up as long as possible so they don't kill their next child, whom the wife is apparently pregnant with! How long does it take to feed a baby? 3 minutes per day could have at least kept that baby from utter starvation. These parents ignored the desp... more

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BostonBoy01 Alternatively lower connection speed will work too. They did however find time to get it on...

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nuthman I think it's supposed to be '1 gigabit' not '1 gigabyte' per second

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Sorene1111 I don't consider video game addictive in the same way meth is addictive. But I do see a few people overly absorbed in them to the point where they neglect real life. If a game interferes with your RL you have a bad habit you need to kick. RL needs to come first. Always.

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visiter It's more fun to conceive a real child, but more fun to raise a virtual child. Sounds like this couple wanted the best of both worlds.

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