

DEADLOCK'S ITEM SHOP: HOW TO KILL THE BLUE GUY

SUBJECT: Gap analysis of a live item shop · one original Tier 4 design

*"...and the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his
face to the earth."*

1 SAMUEL 17:49



PLATE V. THE METHOD,
DEMONSTRATED. DORÉ, 1866.

ABSTRACT

A gap analysis of the live item shop as of June 9, 2026, with an original item proposal. All claims come from [deadlock.wiki](#) and the [public patch archive](#). Live numbers are cited when they influence a decision.

PT. 01 **DECALOGUE**

“...write them upon the table of thine heart.”

PROVERBS 7:3



PLATE IV. THE FIRST EDITION,
MISHANDLED. DORÉ, 1866.

TEN LAWS. RECOVERED INTACT. TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL. SOME WORDS
RESIST TRANSLATION.

I. EVERY THREAT SHIPS WITH ITS ANSWER.

If the game ships a problem, it ships the counter: to a hero, to an item, to a strategy. Counters start cheap and personal, and grow team-wide and expensive as the threat does. A counter nobody can see is not a counter. *[In the original: <ƒ†•MƒR•>M†MM•PMMF, every threat bears its answer. The word MƒR, threat, shares a root with “merchandise.”]*

II. NEVER NERF THE REASON SOMEONE QUEUES.

Some mechanics are why a player shows up at all. Movement is the canonical case: strong, and some people are only here for it. When something beloved overperforms, the fix is an answer, not a smaller number on the thing they love. Shave the joy and they quietly leave. Ship the answer and both sides get a game. *[In the original: †ƒ•<ƒR†•Hƒ•M††, do not unmake the joy. M†† is joy, but also “the reason one returns.”]*

III. REWORK THE COST, NEVER THE SOUL.

A redesign keeps the fantasy that made people love the original and reprices what it costs to use. If the rework wins but the players who loved it leave, the rework lost.

IV. FULL VALUE REQUIRES RISK.

Power pays out on commitment: on hero hit, not flat. In the fight, not from across the map. Effects gate on landing something, so dodge, purge, and spacing stay relevant. The lazy version of anything is the system whose rewards always outweigh the risks. I do not build those systems.

V. UPTIME IS A STAT.

Power is rate times uptime, and the duty cycle gets read before the damage number. Half the broken things in any patch are uptime problems wearing a damage costume. *[In the original: MM<•H†•††M, the clock is also a number. MM< covers clock, cycle, and uptime; the language does not distinguish them.]*

VI. REUSE LIVE VERBS.

Every mechanic I propose already exists in the game in some form, so new work reads like it was always there. That is a default, not a ban on invention: brand-new machinery is welcome, it just belongs in a major update, not a Tuesday patch.

VII. CONSERVATIVE NUMBERS, NAMED KILL CRITERIA.

Lever before reworks: the right fix is usually a number, rarely a redesign. Every change ships calibrated against what is live, with its failure condition stated in advance. A proposal that cannot say what data would kill it is not a design; it is a wish.

VIII. CHECK THE DATA BEFORE THE NERF.

Perception is not overperformance. Pickrates, winrates, and win-probability impact get pulled before a number moves. A gut read gets labeled a gut read, and sometimes the gut read wins: numbers lie too. Reverting an over-nerf is a buff to the game, not an admission. *[In the original: <FRF•MM•FRM, read the ashes. FRM is data: what remains of the fire.]*

IX. OBJECTIVES NEVER PAY THE WINNER TWICE.

A “win harder” objective is a design hole. Comeback should be strong: every game should stay winnable, because that is what keeps games fun. But the road back is earned through the structure, never handed over on a silver platter. Comeback is a property of the map, not a coupon.

X. REAL HOLES. REAL SOLUTIONS.

A design must fill a gap nothing else fills: a missing counter, a missing role, a missing reason to fight. I do not make something just for the sake of making something.

I surveyed all items (800 / 1,600 / 3,200 / 6,400) in each category, looking for niches where the shop sells a threat but not its answer, or seeds an archetype/idea and abandons it. I also included some lived experience: I have played this game at a top-100 global rank. This is where they intersected.

PT. 02 HOW TO KILL THE BIG BLUE GUY: ANTI-HEAL

It's 20 minutes into the game. You are playing Billy at full health. You enter a 1v2 fight against an Abrams (the big blue guy) and a Silver, both at about 25% HP. You engage but can't out-damage their regen. As the camera shows Abrams t-bagging you on the death screen, you search "Healing Reduction." Six items appear.

Healbane (Vitality, 1,600) rides on your spirit damage and gives you a bit of spirit power. You don't feel like you deal enough sustained spirit damage overall to justify this purchase. Solid item, could work, but not the ideal buy.

Toxic Bullets (Weapon, 3,200) requires sustained bullet buildup, reduces healing, and does %maxhp damage. It looks interesting, especially if you are a gun-tank hybrid. But it provides no innate stats and only scales well if you invest heavily into spirit power. Again, not ideal.

Decay (Spirit, 3,200) is the honest contender. Point-and-click at 20m, 50% healing reduction for 10s on a 30s cooldown, and the one anti-heal input a CC'd frontliner can still reliably give. It gives some spirit power and bonus health. But run it against the scenario: two heroes are regening in your face, and Decay cuts one of them, a third of the time. Most people don't buy Decay for the anti-heal anyway; they buy it for the damage and how it interacts with abilities like Shiv Rage or Rem Tag Along. You lack such synergy, and 3,200 parked in Spirit stays parked in Spirit. Close, but no.

Crippling Headshot (Weapon, 6,400) requires headshots. Could work. Expensive though, and a lot of investment into Weapon for a character whose team is relying on them to sustain and soak cooldowns.

Spirit Burn (Spirit, 6,400, a 12m AoE at 70% reduction). Interesting, but you don't do enough burst spirit damage to proc the burn, and also don't want that much investment into Spirit. Skip.

Inhibitor (Vitality, 6,400). The most appealing option:

- 6,400 Vitality investment (equivalent to a maximum of 42% bonus health)
- 150 bonus health innate
- And, what is effectively a 30% “resist” to every damage type (in a 1v1 at least, when the debuff is applied)

The issue with Inhibitor, like Toxic Bullets, is that it requires buildup from your gun. As the frontliner, you usually take every CC to the face: a disarm here, a stun there, a knockup to top it off. Continuously shooting and building the debuff on enemies amid this isn't easy.

Here is the whole shelf in one place:

ITEM	CATEGORY	COST	INPUT REQUIRED	HEALCUT
Healbane	Vitality T2	1,600	your spirit damage	35%
Toxic Bullets	Weapon T3	3,200	bullet buildup	35%
Decay	Spirit T3	3,200	a targeted cast at 20m	50%
Crippling Headshot	Weapon T4	6,400	a headshot	35%
Spirit Burn	Spirit T4	6,400	burst spirit damage	70%
Inhibitor	Vitality T4	6,400	bullet buildup	40%

The obvious idea is an item a tank can buy that just healcuts everyone around you. But all anti-heal options require landing something: damage, a headshot, a cast. This isn't an oversight. It is an invariant: anti-heal is a debuff class whose counterplay is itemization and positioning. Its application is gated on player input to keep dodge, purge, and spacing relevant.

So let's design with those principles in mind, but keep the idea of "anti-heal around you that a tank would buy." The first thing that the general description of this item does is provide the ideal shop category.

T1 It cannot live at T1 (800). This would destroy the lane HP trading economy. It could be an interesting angle if I wanted to change the early game meta completely, but that's not the goal. Items at this tier are generally basic, and what I'm making isn't basic.

T2 Healbane monopolizes T2 (1,600). T2 is very cheap for anti-heal. T2 is also where the "counter" items begin (I will discuss this later). Healbane is balanced on a knife's edge: proc the anti-heal on someone, then go in for the kill to get full value from the on-kill burst heal. It also does not upgrade into anything. Another thing I will discuss later. Personally, I believe it is the best-designed item in the game.

T3 T3 (3,200) is where Decay and Toxic Bullets live: anti-heal you "aim" (aim in quotes because that is doing a lot of work describing how you apply Decay). 3,200 buys aimed anti-heal. The ambient version has to cost more than the aimed version, or aiming stops being worth anything. Skip.

T4 That leaves T4 (6,400), and 6,400 isn't just acceptable, it's the honest answer. Look at what's actually killing you in the Abrams & Silver scenario. They're not healing with Healing Rite or Extra Regen. They're using matured sustain: T3 AP upgrades like boosted health regeneration on Abrams' Infernal Resilience +8% Regen or Silver's Transform Heal, and capstone items like Vampiric Burst or Infuser. The threat is a 6,400-tier threat, and the walkthrough showed the 6,400 anti-heal shelf (Crippling Headshot, Spirit Burn, Inhibitor) fails the frontliner because every one of them needs an input the frontliner can't reliably give. So the gap isn't that anti-heal is missing. The gap is that the capstone tier of the anti-heal food chain has no entry the tank can use, while the capstone tier of sustain works for everyone. Burst damage heroes buy Spirit Burn as their capstone. Gun heroes buy Inhibitor or Crippling Headshot. Counters are priced based on the

threat level. That's the placement argument, with a bonus: at 6,400 I can sit at the top of the healcut food chain.

Category: Vitality, and this is a targeting decision, not a flavor one. Slots are the quietest balance lever in Deadlock's shop. A carry's slots are precious, contested by fire rate, weapon damage, and debuff resistance / defensives / dispels. A frontliner's slots look like what a vegetarian might eat for breakfast. Putting this item in Vitality means the carry pays a real opportunity cost to buy it, and the tank incurs almost none. That's the first of three gates I'm stacking to control who buys this thing, because I want to be honest about my design goal: I don't want this to be a jack-of-all-trades item, and I don't really want non-tanks buying it. Every choice below is some form of "worthless to the wrong buyer."

Upgrades from Torment Pulse. A 3,200 Spirit item turning into a 6,400 Vitality item. This upgrade means that you lose the Spirit investment bonus and gain the Vitality investment bonus. Convert your spirit power into a massive health bonus later in the game. And the buyer histogram comes pre-built: the people who buy Torment Pulse today are already brawlers who stand inside the enemy team. The upgrade inherits exactly the buyers this design wants.

So here's the item.

Pacemaker

CLASS

Vitality

UPGRADES FROM

Torment Pulse (Spirit, 3,200)

INNATE

+125 Bonus Health, +30% Melee Resist

PASSIVE · 4S COOLDOWN

Periodically pulse a 10m wave that deals spirit damage equal to 75 (0.23x spirit scaling) + 7% of your missing health (0.04x spirit scaling) and applies -25% Healing Reduction for 2s

SUCCESS METRIC: A BUYER HISTOGRAM, NOT A WIN RATE.

WHY NOT UPGRADE FROM HEALBANE?

Healbane is sitting right there at 1,600, same job, practically begging to be the base. You would be mistaken.

Healbane is balanced by its dead-end. It gets to be that soul-efficient at 1,600 precisely because it never converts into slot-efficiency later: you buy it, it does its job, and eventually you sell it to make room. Give it an upgrade path, and you've accidentally buffed the 1,600 purchase for every player in every game, because now it's not a stopgap, it's a down payment. A buff to an item I never touched. A quick way to get yelled at.

That was balancing gate one (the Vitality category). Here are the other two.

Gate 2 is the missing-health engine. The wave that fires at full health is nearly identical, DPS-wise, to Torment Pulse: 25 damage every 1.4 seconds is 17.9 DPS capped at the two closest enemies in 9m, and 75 every 4 seconds is 18.75 in a bigger room. The input Pacemaker demands is the most expensive input in the game: being in the fight and taking damage for the privilege. Every other anti-heal asks you to land something. This one asks you to die for it. It's the Healbane brilliance repurposed: Healbane pays you for committing to a kill, Pacemaker pays you for committing your health bar. And running it off missing health quietly makes it worthless to the wrong buyer. A squishy missing 200 health pulses for nothing, a rounding error. A frontliner missing 3,000, minutes deep into a brawl, pulses for 285, every 4 seconds, to everything in a 10-meter radius. That is 71 DPS to a clump with no cap on bodies, and it is exactly the number the tuning section exists for.

Gate 3 is the innate stat line. Melee resist only matters if people are punching you: dead weight on a ranged carry, exactly the right resist for the guy currently eating Abrams punches for a living. No damage amp, no fire rate, no spirit power. Nothing on this item directly improves a carry build, which is the point. The innate line is lean for 6,400. The passive is the product.

One more piece of honesty. There is a buyer the gates don't stop: heroes who damage themselves. Lady Geist pays 30% of her health-to-damage to cast Essence Bomb. Victor's Jumpstart costs him 15% of his current health, and he can choose to bleed more by channeling his Aura of Suffering. Both are missing health on demand, on their own schedule, with the refill built into their kits. I'm not adding a fourth gate to stop them. I'm acknowledging them instead, because look at how those two actually play: inside the fight, health bar as the resource. They're frontliners in practice. The engine finding them isn't a leak, it's a fit. And the loop the histogram can't see: spirit lifesteal refunding the health bar that powers the wave. That one gets its own tracked number, healing from the pulse, and if the wave starts paying its own health bill, it stops feeding lifesteal. I said a proposal that cannot say what data would kill it is a wish. This is the data that kills this one.

The 25% healing reduction is low. It's the lowest in the item shop. Pacemaker sits under the standard on purpose. Every one of those items makes you aim for something. Pacemaker's application is positional and periodic: stand in the right place and bleed. Lower input always pays a lower tax. 25% is the tax, zero exceptions, not even for my own item.

The wave being spirit damage is also a sneaky little door: it procs Healbane's debuff if you own both. Intentional, and intentionally expensive: 8,000 souls and two slots buys you roughly 51% combined healcut on wave hits ($1 - 0.75 \times 0.65$, multiplicative, as the game intends). Decay-grade suppression exists in this design, but only as a deliberate double investment. Never as a default.

Not only that, but if there's anything the patch archive shows about the people who make this game, it's that they love hybrid items. On May 22, 2026, they turned Spirit Lifesteal (T2 Vitality) into the component for Spiritual Overflow (T4 Weapon), the latest in a line of cross-tree upgrades. A green item that does damage? That scales with spirit? That's cool. That's unique. That's fun.

Which pays off that "I will discuss this later": counters begin at T2 because counters in this shop start cheap and personal. Healbane (1,600) answers healing, Debuff Reducer (1,600) answers CC, Slowing Hex (1,600) answers mobility. As you go up the tiers, they grow team-wide and become more expensive. Pacemaker is just the top floor of an existing building.

Counterplay, in writing: 2 seconds of debuff on a 4-second cycle leaves a 2-second window every cycle where the healcut is simply off. Time your healing through the gap, and it heals fine. Debuff Resist shortens the 2 seconds. Dispel Magic purges it clean, because it's a normal debuff, not a field. The lazy version of this item, a passive aura, fails all three of those interactions at once, which is exactly why every live healing-reduction source is input-gated and why the aura never left my brain.

The boring property, last: everything in this spec already exists in the game as a live modifier. The pulse clock is Torment Pulse's, out-of-combat silence included. The wave is Cold Front's expanding blast on that clock. The missing-health read lives in kits already: Silver's ult heals off it, so does Victor's Pain Battery. The healcut is Healbane's debuff with a smaller number on it. Melee resist is a stat line. There is no new technology here, on purpose. Cheap to build, cheap to revert, and a live team only ships experiments it can take back.

THINGS I CUT

- ~~A knockup on the wave. A wave that deals weapon damage (think Groudon's Fissure from Pokémon. Something resembling an earthquake). Periodic automatic CC has input on neither side; it's also very frustrating and dense.~~
- ~~A Spirit slot that contradicts the buyer for whom this whole design exists.~~
- ~~A Healbane upgrade path, covered above. The dead-end is the lever.~~

One job. Stand in the middle of the enemy team. Cut their healing. Do a bit of extra damage along the way, but sacrifice your health for it.

And here's my favorite property. Shoot the Pacemaker tank and their waves ramp, because their missing health is your doing: you are personally fueling the healcut. Ignore them, and they're a full-health frontliner peeling freely on your carry. Focusing them is wrong and ignoring them is wrong at the same time. I like dilemmas like this. Gaming needs more of them.

The success of this item is a buyer histogram, not a win rate. Pickrate concentrated on frontliners, purchaser WPA inside +4% (standard for most T4 items. Not raw winrate because raw winrate on a 6,400 item is survivorship bias: people rich enough to buy T4s are usually already winning.) A counter item that wins games by itself isn't a counter item; it's a problem.

The things I would look at while tuning: wave damage first. The wave should never be anyone's main damage source, so damage is the first thing I tune down. The upgrade out of Torment Pulse has to feel worth taking, so if it doesn't, damage is also the first thing I tune up. My guess at the actual first balance pass: shift the spirit scaling onto the base damage and off the missing-health component. Health items already scale the missing-health half; spirit scaling on top of it is double dipping. Healcut second, and the 25% itself likely will never move, and if it does, it will be upwards: uptime and radius are the levers. If Billy isn't buying this into an Abrams and a Silver t-bagging them on the death screen, I will know it is undertuned.

JACKLARMER@PROTONMAIL.COM

[X.COM/WICKDEADLOCK](https://x.com/wickdeadlock)