

Syndicate Strife

Manic Volcanic (ft. Adam Maresca)

Answer: **HIGH PRICE**

The prompt formats and well-chosen synonyms for the title point to the *Family Feud* game show, but something is still not quite right. Further reading into the flavortext and the font choice leads to a TAS (tool-assisted speedrun) of *Family Feud* for the Super Nintendo, the most famous of which [abuses the game's text parser for comedic effect](#). (If you're not familiar: enjoy!)

In the game, as long as the correct letters for an expected answer are present in the correct order, the guess is accepted. Search through the puzzle's "joke" answers to find legitimate members of the set that the text parser would accept, then take the indicated letters and anagram them to make another set member.

NAME AN ANIMATED DOG.

A BARKING MAN	BRIAN
BOOGIE WOOGIE FAIRY	GOOFY
COOL YOUR SEWAGE	COURAGE
NASTY ARIZONA	ASTRO
SICKO ROBOT YARD POOCH	SCOOBY DOO
SMUTTY TALK BETTY	MUTTLEY

#1 ANSWER: 6 - - 16 11 1
G R O M I T

NAME SOMETHING YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR.

BARBIE DAYCARE RECYCLING	BABY CRYING
DO NOT PARK BY THE HILL	DOORBELL
FRIED RICE ALL AROUND ME	FIRE ALARM
REBA IS DONE WITH SHOWBIZ	BAD NEWS
SHOULDER MY RUG SLICK	HOLD MUSIC
UNCOUTH GLOVE WHIPPING	COUGHING
WARM GUM INVENTIONS	ARGUMENT

#1 ANSWER: 19 - - 2 14 - 18
C A R H O R N

NAME A EUROPEAN CITY.

BIG LOUD CRAPPY WEBSITE	BUDAPEST
EUROPE IS DUMB DUDE	ROME
FANTASY WEREWOLF PLACE	ANTWERP
LOONY BIN HOEDOWN	LONDON
PLAY OUTER WILDS	PARIS
SUPER BAD GUESS	PRAGUE

#1 ANSWER: - 10 12 15 3 -
M A D R I D

NAME A SUBSCRIPTION STREAMING SERVICE.

HAPPY PROBLEM QUESTION CLUB	APPLE MUSIC
HOT BODIES MEGAMIX	HBO MAX
NEATO FAMILY SIZE BOXES	NETFLIX
NOT A FAIR DEAL	TIDAL
PAINFUL EDITORIALS	PANDORA
SADISTIC NEW SYPHILIS GUYS	DISNEY PLUS
SHUT UP DAD YOU JERK	SHUDDER

#1 ANSWER: 4 9 - - 17 13 -
S P O T I F Y

NAME A KIND OF NATURAL DISASTER.

A BILLION PUZZLES ARE DOPE	BLIZZARD
FLOATING SHUFFLEBOARD LORDS	FLASH FLOOD
I HEARD THE SQUARE BROKE	EARTHQUAKE
LAVA BLASTING CHICKEN	AVALANCHE
MURDEROUS GHOSTS	DROUGHT
NERVOUS SPOTTED LIONS	ERUPTION
POSTMODERN BADMINTON	TORNADO
THE SUN IS A VAMPIRE	TSUNAMI
YOU STINK HAHA YOU LOSE	SINKHOLE

#1 ANSWER: 7 5 - - 8 - - - 20
H U R R I C A N E

Once all 20 of the indicated letter positions are filled, arrange them into the final phrase, and "scan through" one last time to extract the final answer, **HIGH PRICE**.

???? (???) ? ????? ??? ?????? (4 5)
THIS (UGH) I PAID FOR MINCE (HIGH PRICE)

Author's Notes

Manic: This puzzle is proof that you really can just write about anything you want. The parser from the TAS video fell so naturally into a puzzle mechanic that it almost felt like cheating. From there, it was a matter of writing funny clue phrases without ambiguity, which Adam did most of the heavy lifting on. Some fun facts:

- The "something you don't want to hear" category was what I came up with as draft 0, and survived mostly unchanged to the final version of the puzzle.
- SOUL MUSIC is an unfortunate ambiguity, but gives the same extraction and is, in fact, something I *do* want to hear.
- The "cities" category exists solely for the PLAY OUTER WILDS clue phrase.
- The visuals are edited screenshots from the SNES Family Feud game, and were added well after the puzzle's content was finalized.
- This is the first puzzle I've ever written! I think it turned out pretty well.

Adam: Maybe Manic and I are the only people in the puzzle community who remember this TAS, but isn't inflicting your tastes on others part of what writing puzzles is all about? I had the most fun writing the natural disaster round; just call me Incredible Reggie. (And ditto on the SOUL MUSIC thing; not sure what that was about.)