

THE MASQUE OF SLAANESH.....

167 points

The Masque of Slaanesh, also known simply as The Masque, is the most infamous Daemonette and Herald of Slaanesh to have ever plagued the sentient creatures of the galaxy. Once Slaanesh's favoured dancer and chief handmaiden, she was cast out by her master, and cursed to forever dance through the Materium and Immaterium alike. The Masque has turned this curse into a potent weapon, forcing any being she manages to seduce with her hypnotic dance to join her performance until the unfortunate soul drops dead from exhaustion.

Once the chief handmaiden of Slaanesh, the Masque used to comb the Dark Prince's shining hair and oil it with fragrant balms. When Slaanesh's mood was grim, the Masque would dance to lighten his thoughts, enrapturing her god with the most dazzling and acrobatic displays. Yet for all of Slaanesh's indulgence, the Masque was ultimately to become the most despised of all the Prince of Pleasure's servants.



During the eternal wrangling and wars within the Realm of Chaos between the Chaos Gods known as the Great Game, it came about that Tzeentch tricked Slaanesh into an unwinnable battle against both Khorne and Nurgle - the ill-fated Provocation Wars. It was a hard-fought series of campaigns that ended only with the Dark Prince's utter defeat and subsequent humiliation by his arch-nemesis. Seeing the dark mood of her master, the Masque took it upon herself to ease his heart with her most energetic and scintillating dance ever. Where once her leaps and pirouettes had brought laughter and joy, now Slaanesh's bitter heart saw mockery, each perfect combination of moves calculated to be barbs to his pierced pride.

Slaanesh's emotions came to a boiling point, and the Prince of Pleasure unleashed his frustrations on his handmaiden, branding her as a traitor, and placing a fell curse upon her, proclaiming that if she so wanted to dance then she must dance forevermore without pause. And so, it came to be that the Masque was forced to dance eternally across space and time, for both mortal and immortal audiences. Such has been the Masque's doom, to dance across eternity. In the circles of Slaanesh's realm, she pirouettes for other daemonettes, entrancing them with her sinuous movements until they are so enraptured, they can no longer move or speak. She dances at the gates of Khorne, mocking the bloodletters who snarl and growl at her impudence.

The Masque dances across the mortal worlds of the galaxy, trapping those who witness her. Where mortals indulge their senses, where excess overcomes restraint, the Masque appears to lead the incautious on a dance of doom.

As she enacts the tales of Slaanesh's glorious history, his bespoke destiny and his most unholy conquests, her golden mask flickers and changes, matching the roles of the characters she plays, in a manner eerily similar to the way a harlequin troupe performs.

So powerful is the lure of the Masque's display that all who see it feel compelled to join in the performance. Immortal Daemons and crude mortals alike feel this calling in their hearts and are powerless to resist, joining the show as if they had rehearsed their parts for an eternity.

In the "Dance of Dreaming," where the character of the slumbering prince awaits to be born, the Masque's troupe is lulled into a lethargic trance, whilst in the "Dance of Death," a re-enactment of one of Slaanesh's great victories over Khorne, the cast leap and flail and claw at their eyes and throats. Consumed by the ecstasy and agony of the Masque's aura, they will happily dance themselves to death, using up their last ounce of energy, their dying breath, to keep pace with her twirls and somersaults.

The Masque has been known to turn up unheralded on battlefields across the galaxy. She has danced to the screams of those massacred by Khorne's bloodletters, and pirouetted to the droning count of Nurgle's plaguebearers, a figure of grace amongst the brutal and the bloated. More often, however, the Masque will appear alongside the cavalcades of her master's daemonic Legions of Excess. Her insane prancing reaches new heights when she is at the centre of a Courante Legion, surrounded by cavorting Daemonettes. There, her dazzling acrobatics inspire her sisters to magnificent performances of bloodshed. If she could follow her own will that is where she might stay, but Slaanesh can be petulant, and still refuses to remove the hex upon her. So does the Masque continue dancing wherever the fickle whims of her curse takes her.

During the 13th Black Crusade, at the Battle of Biel-Tan, the Masque emerged alongside the bloodthirster Skarbrand and was able to invade the craftworld through a Webway portal on the daemon world of Ursulia, which had once been an Exodite-controlled maiden world before it was invaded by the joint daemonic forces of Khorne and Slaanesh. The Masque was eventually able to invade Biel-tan's infinity circuit and would have consumed all of its souls for Slaanesh if not for the efforts of Yvraine of the Ynnari, who was able to summon the Yncarne, the Avatar of Ynnead, the Eldar god of the dead, banish the Daemon back to the Warp with his power.

The Masque's behaviour is eerily similar to that of the Eldar Harlequins. This is not surprising, as the Prince of Pleasure was born from the collective hedonistic depravity of the Eldar race. Enticing Eldar, especially Harlequins, into dancing themselves to death is one of the Masque's favourite activities.

The Harlequins have a performance that tells the tale of how the Masque once managed to infiltrate one of their Troupes, and entranced both the Troupe and the audience with her whirling spell. It was only when a Solitaire appeared that the spell was eventually broken; as the only Eldar able to impersonate "She-Who-Thirsts," the Solitaire was immune to the Masque's spell, and was able to match her move for move for six Terran days and nights until the Masque finally faltered and missed a step. Horrified at this failure, the Masque fled, and she now seeks eternal revenge on the servants of Cegorach.

Your **Daemon World** force may be led by The Masque if it is comprised of Slaanesh daemons and models with the Mark of Slaanesh only. She may be included within a **Chaos** or **Chaos Cult** force where she costs 5 Summoning points to summon.

Troop Type	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld
The Masque	4	9	8	5	4	3	9	5	10

WEAPONS: Serrated Claws (+1 strength in hand-to-hand combat)

REWARDS: The Masque has the **Gaze of Slaanesh** and **Allure of Slaanesh** rewards.

STRATEGY: The Masque has a Strategy Rating of 3.

SPECIAL: The Masque is a Daemon and all the special rules pertaining to daemons apply.

The Masque causes *fear* as described in the Psychology section of the Warhammer 40,000 rulebook.

The Masque has a Daemonic Aura saving throw of 4+.

The Masque has a Psychic Power level of 2, however she only knows a single psychic power as per her rules below.



Dazzling Acrobatics: *The Masque's movement across the battlefield is an elaborate and hypnotic manifestation of the guile of Slaanesh; fast, majestic and utterly beautiful to behold.* The Masque may triple her move distance when running or charging. In addition, no matter how far she moves enemy units are always at a -1 To Hit modifier when targeting the Masque and, in addition, if she is the closest target, enemy units must first pass a Leadership test in order to fire. Finally the Masque's rolls of 1 in hand-to-hand combat never count as a negative modifier.

The Eternal Dance: *The Masque's very presence is enough to unconsciously subdue the minds and souls of nearly all mortals.* If she is engaged in hand-to-hand combat with an enemy model or unit, or within 1" of them, then the unit is at +1 to Hit from all friendly shooting attacks. In addition, the unit is at -1 Initiative for close combat result purposes. The following models are immune to the Eternal Dance: All Primarchs, Daemons, Culexus Assassins and any other model immune to psychic powers.

The Gaze of Slaanesh: The Masque has been granted the ability to direct a lurid, eldritch gaze towards nearby enemies, distracting them and weakening their resolve. Any enemy models attempting to fight The Masque in hand-to-hand combat have their Attacks characteristic reduced by -1 point.

Allure of Slaanesh: In hand-to-hand combat, enemy models must test against their Leadership on 3D6 to be able to strike the Masque. If they fail the test then they fight normally, but if they win the combat they will not strike the model and so any hits are wasted and the combat is treated as a draw. Once an enemy model has passed this test, it need not test again.

The Murderdance.....Force Level 2
*This is a unique Psychic Power available only to The Masque. She may cast it once per Psychic phase and it may be nullified or saved against as per any other psychic power. The power **does not** require any force cards to cast.*

RANGE: 8"

This psychic power counts as a shooting attack (no to hit roll necessary) and if successfully cast the enemy unit or model targeted must take a Leadership test. If they pass, nothing happens. If they fail, each model affected hits itself with an assault weapon chosen at random. If the model is not armed with an assault weapon then it will shoot the nearest model.

When they are not reclining around their master's throne, the Heralds of Slaanesh serve the god in other ways. Primarily, the handmaidens act as lieutenants in the Dark Prince's Legions of Excess, leading the Lesser Daemons of the legions' constituent cavalcades to fulfil the desires of each legion's ruling Keeper of Secrets.

There are a number of titles borne by the Heralds of Slaanesh, such as "Artisan of Pain," "Abbess of Avarice," or a "High Bacchante of Glut." Whatever the epithet, a Slaaneshi Herald is a beacon of depravity, and wherever she goes, she whips the other minions of the Dark Prince into a hedonistic furore, inspiring them to new heights of depravity.

While they are masterful warriors and leaders, it is also to these depraved creatures that the Lord of Excess entrusts its more subtle machinations -- such as acting as temptresses within the varied circles of torment that surround the Pleasure Palace in the Realm of Chaos, or seducing weak-willed mortals to their god's cause -- as of all Slaanesh's Daemons, they are most sensitive to the delicacy that the Dark Prince's ploys require on occasion.

They might establish Slaaneshi Chaos Cults, corrupt planetary governors, or simply assassinate a troublesome commander in his quarters. With promises of glory and self-fulfillment, the Herald twists the aspirations and ambitions of her prey into self-obsession, paranoia and madness, luring the victim onto the indulgent road towards self-destruction and the furtherance of the Dark Prince's desires.