

# The Essence of Fire

By roguehobbit

Submitted: January 27, 2006

Updated: January 27, 2006

*Oneshot. Fire needs air to exist. Zuko deliberates this and other principles of fire as he searches for the last Airbender.*

Provided by Fanart Central.

<http://www.fanart-central.net/stories/user/roguehobbit/27248/The-Essence-of-Fire>

**Chapter 1 - Untitled**

**2**

# 1 - Untitled

by roguehobbit

x

x

x

Prince Zuko stood on the bow of his ship, staring unseeingly out at the ocean. He was alone on this area of the ship and expected to remain so. His uncle had already retired for the night and suggested that the young prince do the same. Zuko had waved his hand in vague dismissal, and Iroh had left him in favor of his own sleep.

He was now alone with his thoughts- an all too rare occasion lately, since the Avatar had been found.

With his thoughts once again turned towards the elusive Airbender, Zuko's hand clenched and then generated a ball of fire. The flames leapt into the air, trying to feed on it, searching for something more substantial to feast on.

Zuko watched the tongues of flame dance in his hand, the fire licking the air.

Already the Fire Nation had wiped out all the Air Nomads. The Water Tribes were scattered, either trying to remain hidden or allied with an Earth Kingdom. And the Earth Kingdoms were all but dominated.

Zuko continued watching the flames. If he laid his hand on the railing of the ship, the fire would spread, and keep going.

When would it end?

Ozai had already ordered one genocide. Once the last two Elementals were destroyed...

Zuko's thought pattern came up against a wall of uncertainty. What then? The Fire Nation would rule supreme, easily controlling the non-elemental counties left. But would that be enough? Would his father's lust for conquest be quenched? Zuko doubted it.

Fire needed something to devour. Zuko knew, deep within himself, that his father wouldn't stop with just imprisoning or enslaving all Earthbenders. Once all the Earth Kingdoms were conquered his father would order another holocaust.

Would the fire that had destroyed all other elements be slated, or would it consume itself? Civil war could be just over the horizon.

Or would it simply burn out? Fire needed air to exist. Only one Airbender was left, and once his father got a hold of him, there would be no more Air Elementals.

Zuko once again contemplated laying his hand on the railing. Once it had consumed the entire ship, there would be nothing left. The fire would extinguish, leaving behind only smoke and ash, which would soon be scattered by the waves and wind.

Was the great Fire Nation destined to become merely a smear of ash on the pages of history?

Ozai was too power hungry to realize one of the main essences of fire. It needed the other elements: air, to allow its existence; earth, to sustain it; even water, to quench it before it consumed all.

In fact, Zuko thought bitterly, fire was the weakest element of all.

In the old myths, it was said that all the elements were needed to balance everything and that this applied to people too. That was why there was an Avatar, a bender who was master of all four elements, who kept everything in balance. But the balances had shifted in Fire's favor.

With a sudden flash of clarity Zuko realized the harm that his father was creating. Not just to other nations, but to the world.

*You fool, you've already lost.*

The sixteen-year-old's mouth curved in something resembling a smile. He would find the Avatar and the young Airbender would be his ticket back to the Fire Nation. He would regain his birthright.

And then...and then Zuko would make Ozai pay for banishing him. And once he was Fire Lord...

Zuko closed his hand, snuffing out the flame.

*He would regain the balance.*

x

x

x

Zuko's such a complicated character. Not evil, but definitely too Machiavellian to be 'one of the good guys'. I wuv him. :3 Ahem. Sorry, fell into fangirl-mode there. As I hope you could tell, Zuko hasn't seen the errors of his ways or anything, he still wants to regain his honor by capturing Aang. And he's willing to use whoever or whatever to gain power. He just has realized that wiping out all those people probably isn't a good thing.

In the cartoon, it looks like Zuko still loves his father (*I certainly wouldn't...*), and wants to prove his worth. Well, in this fic he's been embittered by his banishment and has noticed the obvious royal

succession...