A Matter of Convenience

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A Matter of Convenience

by bustybarnes

Summary

This was never meant to be his career, but here Bucky was, lead cashier at the OneStop. It wasn’t so bad. He was the only guy in a store full of women, so, yeah he did his fair share of chasing off creeps who wouldn’t (or just downright refused) to take no for an answer. In return, he pretty much got to work whenever he wanted to, which was mainly overnight and into the early morning rush. Bucky was a night owl mostly. That way he could hide not only from the harsh light of day but also from all the nightmares that hid in the dark whenever he tried to sleep. And it’s not like he had many options between his PTSD and not wanting to draw attention to his arm.

Or Bucky's a convenience store clerk who meets Steve when he comes in for coffee.

Notes

This wouldn't exist without my fantastic betas, BbeGrl238 & axzanier. This story came about because I worked in a convenience store and got bored one night.
bad. He was the only guy in a store full of women, so, yeah he did his fair share of chasing off creeps who wouldn’t (or just downright refused) to take no for an answer. In return, he pretty much got to work whenever he wanted to, which was mainly overnight and into the early morning rush. Bucky was a night owl mostly. That way he could hide not only from the harsh light of day but also from all the nightmares that hid in the dark whenever he tried to sleep. And it’s not like he had many options between his PTSD and not wanting to draw attention to his arm.

What made his days, well nights, even more enjoyable were his regulars. There weren’t many of them and most of them didn’t say much more than a simple greeting with a smile or a “Do you ever have a night off because I always see you in here?” Bucky just grins at them and says, “Well I have to be in here to see you, now, don’t I? I mean who else is gonna know which cigarettes you get before you even get up to the counter?” He’s always been a natural flirt and more than one customer had fallen for his charms, coming back to meet up with Bucky behind the store in the alley for a quick fuck. It was always understood to be a one time thing, so no numbers were exchanged and it didn’t get weird when or if that regular stopped coming in. Bucky moved on to playful flirting with the next one that caught his eye.

That was until one morning, when a tall, gorgeous, blond man came stumbling into the store and ran square into Bucky, who was putting up a delivery.

“Woah easy there-”

“Sorry! I wasn’t watching where I was going. I hope I didn’t mess you up?”

Bucky looked up into the clearest blue eyes he’d ever seen. “Nah, but the same can’t be said for my display. ‘Spent the last hour building that masterpiece and now look at it.” He put his hands on his hips and shook his head at the toppled Doritos display.

“Oh man, here lemme help you redo it-”

The blond knelt down and started picking up the scattered bags and Bucky couldn’t help the teasing chuckle that escaped his lips.

“Am I picking them up wrong?” The blond looked up, an incredulous, almost offended look in his eyes.

“Not at all, doll. I was just messin’ with ya. That thing only took me about five minutes to put together and it’ll take less than that to redo. But thanks, not many people would be that thoughtful.”

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Over the next few weeks, Bucky discovered that the new blond’s name was Steve; (If he used his debit card for a couple of purchases and Bucky had looked, then who could blame him? He wanted to know what to call the guy other than doll, and sir sounded too formal for anyone that looked so close to his own age.) Steve mainly came in towards the end of Bucky’s shifts and always in a button down and slacks, probably worked in an office somewhere closeby.

As soon as Bucky started greeting Steve by name, Steve did the same to him, if somewhat bashfully, so Bucky poured on the charm. It worked to get Steve to smile so he kept on because Steve had what could sometimes be referred to as a ‘million watt smile’ and Bucky loved seeing it. He made sure he was all smiles as soon as he saw Steve’s blond head come in the door, even if there was a line of people in front of him or the fact that he had to get merchandise checked in from pushy delivery people.
“Mornin’ sunshine! Just the smiling face I needed to see this morning,” Bucky purred as he quickly signed, all but shoved the latest pushy vendor out the door, and turned to see Steve hunched over the coffee pots. He was quiet and withdrawn, not responding to Bucky’s greeting like he usually did. When he finally did look up, there were bags under his eyes that made his normally bright blue eyes look sunken in.

“Hey, Stevie, you okay? You seem… off.”

“Yeah Buck, just tired. Been a long night and I’m in for an even longer day.” Exhaustion was palpable in every word. Bucky leaned against the coffee station so he could still keep an eye on most of the store. They got to the counter at the same time and Steve was struggling to get his wallet out, the back pocket of his pants apparently getting the better of him, combined with obvious sleep deprivation making him not the best with hand coordination.

“You’re good, Steve. I got your coffee this morning. But, if I were you, I’d go home and get some sleep. Well, that’s not entirely true, but I’d make sure you got home and got to bed.” He winked and chuckled when a blush crept into Steve’s face.

“Thanks. Later, Bucky. I hope you get to bed, too. I mean, uhh, I hope you get home soon. I mean-Just. Um. Later, Bucky.” Steve tripped over his feet on the way out the door and Bucky’s grin got progressively wider as he watched him go.

Natasha, the store manager, and Darcy, their morning cashier, had wandered in at some point during the exchange.

“Well, well. Look at that grin. Hey boss lady whaddya think? I think Three-F here might be ready to add another notch to his belt.” Darcy skipped behind the counter while Natasha quietly studied her best friend and coworker.

“I don’t think so, Darce. There’s something different about this smile. It’s not predatory enough. No, I think Three-F might just be retiring. Our Bucky has a crush.”

“Ha-fucking-ha. If you two are finished speculating about my love life, I’d like to get my paperwork done so I can get home sometime before noon. Some of us have shit to do today other than stand around here gossiping about our underlings or, in your case, urchin, our co-workers.”

“Yeah, like pine away over the blond dreamboat that just left?” Darcy quipped as she clocked in.

Bucky’s only answer was to flip her off while he started his paperwork. That way he could keep his head down and only look up at the doorway every once in awhile.

“All day, every time Bucky closed his eyes, all he saw was Steve’s bright blue ones and perfect smile. Saw his cheeks flush red, but not from embarrassment, but passion. Bucky woke up from the first nightmare-less sleep he’d had in years. On top of that, he woke up hard. And that hadn’t happened in...well longer than he could remember. All he could think about was how Steve’s hand would feel
wrapped him as his own hand ghosted down his stomach slowly. Behind his closed eyes, Steve’s eyes were dark and his tongue snaked out to tease his bottom lip (Bucky’d seen him do that once when they’d been joking back and forth and filed it away for just such an occasion). In his mind, Steve’s hand was firm as it began stroking him, knowing to go from the base of his cock all the way to just under the head before flicking his fingers across the head to gather the precum there. He’d twist his wrist in a corkscrew like motion, instinctively knowing that would make Bucky moan before repeating the motion, but just a little faster, one, two, three times until Bucky was thrashing his head back and forth and gripping the sheet with his other arm, being careful not to rip them. His imagination had Steve leaning down to lick up the exposed line of Bucky’s throat and nibble at his ear, encouraging him to let go as his hand kept working on him, twisting up and down, fingers flicking across the increasingly sensitive head of his dick until Bucky’s back was arched and he was spilling into his own hand (not Steve’s dammit) and he was sure he was screaming Steve’s name so loud that all of Brooklyn could hear him, but fuck them, all this was the best he’d felt in too damned long.

Bucky cleaned himself up, changed the top sheet, and settled down to try and get some sleep having made a decision to find out if reality Steve was anywhere near as good as the Steve in his imagination.

Later that night, Bucky felt like he was about to jump out of his skin every time he heard the door chime at the store. Logically he knew it was exceedingly rare for Steve to be in before about 5 or 6 AM, but that didn’t keep him from looking for the blond every time someone came in, especially when that someone happened to have blond hair.

So when 6 AM came around and there was still no Steve, Bucky was getting antsy. He was brewing a fresh pot of coffee when he heard the door chime. Past the point of bounding out to check and see if it was Steve, Bucky just called out, “Be right there…”

“You make all your customers wait on you? I thought it was the other way around?” The sound of the voice he’d been waiting since 11 PM last night to hear almost made him drop the packet of coffee before he could empty it into the brewer. Almost.

“I was wonderin’ if I’d be seein’ your sweet smilin’ face today, Steve.” Bucky sauntered out from behind the drinks island. “Did you get some rest like I told you to?”

“Uhh...no. I guess I forgot where my bed was. Should’ve had somebody show me.” Steve rubbed at his eyes absently and yawned. “Well, I’m off in about 20 minutes if you need a guide. Although I’m not sure how good I’d be since I have no idea where you live. Or you could crash in mine since I’m just around the corner.” Bucky managed a shy smile as he handed Steve a large coffee from the latest pot he’d just brewed.

The blush was back, creeping its way slowly up Steve’s neck into his face as he glanced up at Bucky from under his lashes, which made certain parts of Bucky’s anatomy take notice. “Uhh...as tempting as that is...I have to be at work…” Steve looked at his cell phone, “Twenty minutes ago? Dammit not again…” Steve offered his coffee back to Bucky, but he waved him off.

“Some other time then…”

Steve stopped midway out the door and looked back at Bucky, a puzzled look on his face so Bucky just winked and smiled, his tongue poking out slightly at the corner of his mouth. The blond ducked his head as people pushed past him to get inside and Bucky couldn’t help but chuckle at the ever-present politeness of the man. Even in the face of being propositioned, Steve Rogers (yeah Bucky had checked to get his last name, too, shut up) would be polite.
Bucky decided then and there that the next night that, fuck it, he was done playing games. He was asking Steve out on a date.

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“You sure about that? You haven’t dated anyone since…”

“I know this...I don’t need reminding, Mom. Besides, I’ve done my time in therapy. Anyways, shouldn’t you be telling me all this ‘oh James you deserve to be happy’ bullshit?” Bucky complained when Natasha tried to be the voice of reason over lunch later that day.

“I thought you hated it when I call you James?” She tossed a piece of sushi into her mouth casually.

“And she misses the point again, ladies and gentlemen. Tash, I’m happy. I’m not screwing random customers either in the alley behind the store during business hours or after my shifts. I’m talking about actually dating someone instead of Three F’ing them.”

“First, I told you I didn’t want to know about you screwing customers in the alley during business hours. Second, I don’t not want you to be happy. I want you to be cautious. Wait until after he’s said he’ll go out with you to celebrate. Deal?”

“Oh, he’ll go out with me. Nobody says no to the Buchanan charm.” Bucky grinned and finished his beer in a gulp.

“I did.”

Later that night, Bucky had all his side work done early and even made sure to wear his nice work slacks instead of what Natasha referred to as the ‘grungy ones’. He made sure not to get anything on his shirt or pants the entire night and, the closer to 5 AM it got, the more nervous Bucky got. He made sure to pull his hair back and made sure his glove was on and his sleeve was down so that his left arm and hand were hidden. It’s not that he was weird about having prosthetic arm, but he hadn’t had the chance to tell or show Steve yet so he was being, in Natasha’s words, cautious.

Six AM came and went, but no Steve. Seven, then eight...but no Steve. Well, Bucky thought, as tired as he’d been maybe he was getting some much needed rest. No harm no foul. But it wouldn’t hurt to stay an extra few minutes just in case Steve was running late, too.

By 9:30, it was clear Steve wasn’t coming in. Maria gave him a sympathetic smile (apparently Natasha and Darcy had been talking) and told him that if his guy showed up, she’d call him immediately. (Darcy and Natasha had also apparently shown all the staff his picture from the surveillance footage so they all knew who to look for. Right now Bucky didn’t know whether to kiss or kill them.)

Bucky had the next two days off. At first, he was tempted to just spend the entirety of it in his apartment but then he remembered that he wasn’t a teenager. So he ran errands that he’d been avoiding, dropped by to see his sister but that didn’t last long because Rebecca was on her way to a study session with her bio partner and couldn’t visit long, so from there Bucky went to the gym.

Why hadn’t Steve showed up? It wasn’t like him either. For the better part of two months, like clockwork, every day Steve was in the store between 5 and 6 in the morning every day Monday through Friday. Until this morning. So what had happened? They’d been bantering like they always did...

Oh. No.
“Barnes you fucking idiot,” Bucky grumbled, stopping mid-workout. Everything had been the same between himself and Steve until he went and made that stupid comment about letting Steve crash in his bed. He had been going for light and flirty and Steve probably read it as creeper so had chosen to steer clear of the store permanently.

Bucky spent the whole of his second day off curled up in bed working his way towards the bottom of a bottle of vodka and avoiding all forms of social interaction. By the time he found the bottom of the bottle and crawled back out of it, he had 14 missed calls, all from Natasha, and 30 texts, 20 from Natasha and 10 from Rebecca.

Natasha: ARE. YOU. ALIVE?!?!?!

Becca: Why is Natasha texting and calling me wanting to know the last time i’ve seen you? What’s going on? Are you okay?

Bucky texted Rebecca that he was okay and not to worry. It was just some work stuff that got out of hand. She made him promise to call her later on it the week and he made her promise to come by the store more often. His next call was to Natasha.

“What the fuck, James?!”

“Don’t fucking yell, Tasha. I’m either still drunk, half drunk and starting into the hangover mode, or into one hell of a hangover. I can’t tell which.” He cradled his head in his hands as the room began to spin.

“This is why I told you not to celebrate until AFTER he said yes, idiot.”

“No gloating either or I call out sick.”

“Do it and I’ll fucking fire your ass, “ She hissed, but there was no real menace behind her words, just genuine concern. “Seriously, are you okay or do I need to come over there?”

“No. Just leave me alone, no offense, and I’ll be to work tonight, okay? And tell Darcy to lay off when you two come in tomorrow, da?”

“I make no promises for the urchin, but for my part, of course.”

Work became routine again. Bucky went in, did his side work, greeted his regulars and semi-regulars, did his end of shift paperwork, and went home. Steve was nowhere to be found. He was also persona non grata and was not to be spoken of by the entire staff by order of Natasha. Bucky didn’t go back to Three F’ing customers in the alley. He behaved polite and professional to them, but maintained a certain distance. There were smiles here and there, but no overt familiarity. He came in, worked, went home. Rebecca got him to have dinner with her a couple of times. Darcy and Maria tried to get him to go out with them individually, but he passed, saying he wasn’t in the right mood to be sociable. Natasha got the same answer.

Then, one morning, Natasha was in early training Bucky on how to do the grocery order (she was pushing him to be her assistant manager) when they both heard an oh so familiar voice.

“I’m tellin’ you, Sam. I don’t know what I’d do without you.” Bucky had his back to the counter and Natasha saw the look on his face when the realization hit. He glanced at the surveillance camera to see if he might’ve been mistaken but he wasn’t. There was Steve Rogers back in the store...and he wasn’t alone.

“Where else am I gonna be?” An attractive man about Steve’s height threw his arm around Steve’s
shoulders in an embrace as they walked up to the counter. Thankfully, Natasha saw exactly what Bucky did and subtly motioned for him to head into the back to finish counting everything for the grocery order. She stood up gracefully and stepped into the spot behind the register just as Bucky stepped out of the way.

“Mornin’ Bucky. How…” Steve’s voice faded as Bucky walked with a determined gait towards the store room. He ignored the smile he saw as he breezed by, even as it faded. Part of him was happy that Steve smile was fading but part of him was still reeling from the hurt.

“What was that all about?” Bucky heard Steve’s companion ask, but didn’t wait to hear the answer.

Bucky heard Darcy come in, which meant there had been more than enough time for Steve and whoever that was with him to leave. He actually had been finishing the grocery count so they could do the order. He had finished up when he felt Natasha watching his back.

“I don’t want to know.”

“He asked why you weren’t on the register when he saw you leave.”

“I said I didn’t want know.” Bucky’s voice was deadly calm and equally as quiet as he finished counting, and signed off on the paperwork before handing it to Natasha.

“I told him that you were training to be assistant manager and probably wouldn’t be on third shifts much longer.”

Bucky stood up and stormed out of the store and didn’t stop until he got home. He pulled out another bottle of random liquor this time to crawl into, but instead of opening it and diving in, he stopped. Bucky knew if he started drinking now, he’d be in no condition to go to work later tonight. Instead he changed into a pair of sweatpants, t-shirt, and his running shoes to go for a run. He could deal with rejection. Contrary to the teasing of his coworkers, Bucky did get his fair share of no’s from the people he hit on. He was gracious about it and just turned his sights on the next person. What he couldn’t handle, however, was people who flirted and led him on when they had no intention on following through with their flirtations. It’s one thing to think that you have the right to someone that’s flirted with you. That’s not what Bucky was upset about. All Steve would’ve had to have said any point was ‘Hey I’m flattered but I’m kind sort of seeing someone,’ or ‘Thanks but no thanks’ or a good old fashioned ‘No’ always worked for Bucky.

Before long, Bucky came back to himself all the way at the waterfront and it was damn near lunch time. Young couples were gathering all along the picturesque setting for lunchtime meetings, wheelings and dealings, while Bucky stopped to catch his breath. When he did, he saw a text from Natasha.

Natasha: You needed to see this. Don’t run too long or too far.

There was a video attached. It’s a grainy picture that she’s took off the surveillance footage at the store…and it was of of Steve from that morning. There was no audio (of course), but he could see the look of disappointment on Steve’s face as Natasha said something to him, probably when she said that Bucky was training as assistant manager and wouldn’t be on thirds much longer. He shrugged his whatever’s hand off and walked out. Bucky watched this video at least three more times before he closed his phone to deal with the increasing number of people around him.

And for the second time that day, he spied Steve Rogers and his mystery friend. Thankfully, that time he had the element of surprise as he had a sweatshirt on with the hood up. Bucky turned his
back to the approaching pair to listen.

“So that was the guy you haven’t been able to shut up about?”

“Yeah...I have no clue what was up. Normally he’s...well, he’s never been like that. And the thought of losing him, too. I mean it’s crazy, right? He’s not even mine to lose, but the thought of not seeing him every day? I can’t handle that again so soon after losing Mom. You said it yourself. Find stability and something that makes me smile. Well, he makes me smile...or did before I screwed up it however I did.”

Bucky didn’t know what happened next due to the fact that it happened behind his back but it could only be for the best as he certainly had the stupidest, most dumbfounded expression on his face. He makes Steve smile. Well, made before Bucky had his mood swing at work earlier that day. And what was that about his mom?

He turned his head slightly to make sure the pair was gone before heading to catch the nearest bus home.

Instead of overdoing things and going to the extreme in preparation for Steve to drop by the store, Bucky made sure to be able to be at a place in his work where he could take a break if things were slow without getting behind to talk to the blond. He did wear his nicer pants and made sure to keep his hair pulled back out of his face as well as keeping his left hand and arm covered up just in case. But the universe and The Fates are funny, fickle bitches.

Instead of Steve coming in at his normal time, one of Bucky’s regulars, one of the problematic ones, Brock Rumlow, showed up around 4AM and refused to leave. Normally, Bucky would just call the police but, every time Brock would be on the verge of trespassing or loitering, he would buy something else which would entitle him to stay on the premises, all the while leering at Bucky. His last stall tactic was coffee. That was his thing and how he knew Brock was nearing the end of his patience. He had their largest coffee and was just starting on it when Steve came in by himself. Steve barely looked up at him so Bucky made the first move.

“Hey Steve?” He called out and was rewarded when the blond’s head snapped up in surprise.

“Mornin’.” Steve called back quietly. Not forgiven then, at least not completely. Bucky was trying to keep an eye on Steve when Brock got in his eyeline, his self-important smile making Bucky feel grimy and almost sick.

“Aw c’mon babe...what time are you off, like 20, 30 minutes? What say you and me go back to mine and make a day of it?” Brock leaned in so there was less than 6 inches between the two of them.

“As tempting as that is, Brock, I still have paperwork to look over before I leave so I’m gonna have to pass.”

Bucky rang up the couple of customers that come up to the counter and Brock spun his offer a couple of different ways, all to a polite declining, and Brock just scowled, turning back to try and figure out how to rephrase his delivery so that Bucky would accept.

When Steve stepped up to the counter, Bucky didn’t care about anything or anybody other than the blond across from him.

“How have you been?”

“Fine.”
“I, uhh, I wanted to apologize...for yesterday....I had no business.” Bucky was stumbling over his words. He had this whole speech prepared about how he’d planned on asking Steve out and all of that, but Brock’s presence put a damper on the situation.

“You don’t owe me anything.”

“Damn right he doesn’t,” Brock sneered.

“Brock, isn’t it about time for you to be leaving? You know Natasha’s comin’ in soon and you two aren’t the best of friends…” Bucky’s patience was wearing thin. The other man, however, was having none of it.

“You ain’t getting rid of me that easy, doll. It’s Natasha’s day off and I know it. You just want me outta here so there won’t be anybody around to see how you big of an idiot you’re making of yourself. Some charmer you are, doll...you can’t even say a full sentence to this one!” Brock chuckled into his coffee cup but Bucky wasn’t laughing.

“Excuse me, but is there a problem here? Because I’m pretty sure I heard Bucky ask you to leave.”

Bucky’s eyes went wide when he heard Steve’s voice louder than he’d ever heard it before.

“Mind your business, blondie. This don’t concern you.” Brock shrugged him off and tried to elbow his way in front of Steve but the younger man wasn’t budging a single inch. Instead, Steve slammed his hand down onto the counter right beside Brock’s arm, practically shoving the other man back to the side where he’d been standing.

“Actually, I think it does considering you insinuated yourself into our conversation uninvited and then proceeded to dismiss Bucky’s attempt to politely ask you to leave by insulting him and then me. So, I think you should do as suggested and leave before things get out of hand.” Bucky watched as Steve stepped back and pulled himself to his full height, squaring his shoulders. (Okay so Bucky’s mouth watered just a bit.)

“You need to learn when to shut your fucking mouth and mind your fucking business, asshole.” Brock slammed his now empty coffee cup down on the counter right about the time Bucky’s brain came back online. He grabbed the phone and slid across the counter.

“Hey, c’mon you two back off. Brock, you’re banned, permanently. I mean it. I’m calling the cops right now and after them, Natasha. This was your last warning. Off the premises and don’t come back.” He wedged himself between the two extremely angry customers and used his prosthetic arm and hand to shove Brock towards the door, hard, knowing Brock hated prosthetic limbs having seen Bucky’s one morning when his glove had gotten wet.

Brock left muttering a string of curses about Bucky and the store not so quietly. Bucky quickly called the cops to let them know what had happened so they could keep an eye out in case Brock decided to cause trouble over the next few days or weeks. He followed that phone call with one to Natasha to explain what had gone down.

“Fucking finally. I’ve never liked that prick. So what caused it?”

“Uhh...Steve got in his face and I was afraid they were gonna start beating the shit out of each other right here in the store.” Bucky kept his voice low. There was an answering whistle on the other end of the line.

Steve popped up in front of him behind the island where he was on the phone with Natasha. “Bucky,
stay here.”

“What, why? Is Brock back outside? If so, I need to call the cops and have them come by and do a patrol…”

“No, but I’m gonna take a walk and see if I can catch up with him…I wanna finish that talk we started.” Steve was headed towards the door.

“Tash, I gotta go. Steve’s going after Brock to beat the shit out of him.”

“Fuck…close the store and calm him down. I’m on my way.” Bucky barely heard her before he hung up to go flip the lights off & lock the door.

“Steve!! C’mon stop and talk to me.” He had to run to get in front of the taller man.

“Get back in the store. This won’t take long.” Steve’s face was lacking its normal boyish quality. It was replaced with a hard determination of someone set on a fight. Bucky planted his feet and refused to move just to make Steve stop walking & look at him. “I’m just gonna teach him some manners. He had no business talking to you like that. Not callin’ you doll, not the constant no taking no for an answer, not disrespecting you…none of it. And especially not interrupting you when you were trying to talk to me about something that was so important that you were having problems.”

And that’s when it hit him. Steve didn’t like the way Brock had talked to Bucky. Bucky had thought Steve was ready to pummel the guy for insulting Steve, but that wasn’t it at all. Steve was fucking furious that Brock had disrespected Bucky and was ready to teach him a lesson. Steve moved to walk around him so Bucky, thinking fast, grabbed Steve’s wrist and pulled him back close enough so that Bucky could lean up press his lips against the taller blond’s lush and coffee warmed lips. Bucky couldn’t help a slight gasp of surprise when he felt Steve’s hands settle almost protectively on his hips at almost the same time the other man’s tongue began to sneak out and trace along Bucky’s bottom lip.

“Not that I’m complaining but what was that for?” Steve looked down into his eyes slightly, then rested their foreheads together when they parted just moments later.

“I had to figure out a way to calm you down and what can I say, you’re hot when you’re angry. Well, you’re always hot but especially when you’re angry because you’re defending my honor and shit.”

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