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## Beach Body

Beaches in Vancouver can't really be called that. They're more of a collection of thick, gray dust and small rocks bathed by an ocean so cold, the only way to survive a dip is screaming at the top of your lungs for the fifteen seconds you'll manage to stay in just to prove you can. Still, it was my first summer since moving to The Great White North and after one of harshest winters the rainy city had seen in a while, I was looking forward to some lounging time in the sun.

The look of the beach wasn't the only thing that deflated my summer spirit. Where were all the snack vendors shouting over each other, the beer filled styrofoam containers surrounded by cheap chairs and the tens of speakers playing overlapping music that made any individual one impossible to identify or listen to? But I was from Brazil and determined to prove this, the beach, was my turf. Yes, I was born and raised in a mountain town over two hundred miles from the nearest ocean, but no one needed to know that! I was from a tropical country, and therefore, a beach bum at heart. Right?

After getting over the shock of this lack of familiarity we found a tight spot on the packed sand – Vancouverites soak up every ounce of sunshine they can get – and settled down. When a friend suggested we go for a swim and all of us got up to move toward the ocean, the strangeness became too much to bear in silence. "Wait, who's gonna watch our stuff?" I said, fully expecting them to congratulate me for my caution and savvy. Instead, they just stared at me for a full minute, dumbfounded. "Watch it for what?", came the reply. At this point my confidence had deflated somewhat so I kind of mumbled; "You know, for the people stealing them."

The genuine confusion in their faces following that statement is something I'll never forget. "Why would anyone want to steal our stuff?", very canadian Larkyn said, and with shrugs and smiles, they proceeded to the frigid waters. I looked back at our belongings strewn on the sand, at the lack of interest people around us showed in them. Here, my so-believed "street smarts" perfected over twenty-two years of living with urban violence weren't just unimpressive.

They were unnecessary.

I was definitely and happily, out of my discomfort zone.