Tales from the Coffee House 1: It's Complicated

You work for an organization that has decided to try Scrum to see if it can help release new products to customers more quickly. When a new product need is identified, it has typically taken the company about eight months to develop and release the product. The organization "asked" you to be the Scrum Master. You are excited about the opportunity and have been looking to move away from your traditional project management role.

The first few Sprints seemed to go well. The Development Team met some of the Sprint Goal items in the first Sprint but not all. This seemed ok based on what you learned that it would take a Sprint or two to learn just how much the Development Team can agree to for work. The Product Owner and the Stakeholders liked what they were experiencing in the first few sprints with information and what work was complete transparently shared at the Sprint Review.

As things progressed to a handful of Sprints or so, you started to notice a pattern. The Development Team had work that would be "carried over" to the next Sprint. You reviewed your training material, the Scrum Guide and did not see anything called "carry over" and recalled the emphasis on things being "done" as Sprints concluded.

You continued to be at Daily Scrums faithfully to hear what the Development Team had to share regarding Sprint Backlog items.

Today's Daily Scrum almost seemed to be a played back recording from the other days. Development Team members went around the circle and said "I'm still coding. No blockers.". You decided to probe a bit further and asked one of them what it was they were still coding and why it had not gotten to done with several days in to the Sprint.

"It's complicated so I don't want to talk about it," was the reply. You weren't really sure what to do with this response so you attempted to ask another team member the same question.

"Yeah, I agree. I think it's just too complicated to get into. I'm still working on it," was that reply.

As the Daily Scrum drew to a close you left frustrated knowing something wasn't quite right and but were unsure how to get to the root cause of the problem and then what to do to remedy that.

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- Consider Empiricism (Transparency, Inspection and Adaptation) specifically. What is not working effectively?
- What would you do if you were the Scrum Master in this situation? Be as specific as you can.