**pebbles**

I find it quite fascinating how tiny little pebbles sometimes find their way into my shoe no matter where I am. It is ridiculous how seldom I will actually stop and take it out immediately, because how much could this tiny pebble really bother me?

Does this sound familiar?

The fact is, it is there, you know it’s there, and you are just like, “Meh, it will go away.” Honestly though? Where on earth would it actually go? It is already where it wants to be; annoying you beyond belief.

Now imagine you are standing at the bottom of this huge mountain that you want to climb. Suddenly, you are being chased by an angry Product Owner, I mean, angry mountain goat. You can’t stop and take out the pebble now, because you have to get away from the goat, and the only place you can escape to, is a cabin; but it is still a few hundred metres away. All you are thinking about, as you run is, “Oh my word, this freaking stone hurts!” Somehow, it’s a stone in your shoe now, not just a tiny pebble anymore; the longer it is there, the bigger it feels. By the time you reach the cabin, there is no more space in your shoe for your foot, because it feels like there is a boulder in there now.

Have you ever experienced this in a sprint? A tiny little issue that starts off as a niggle, and you don’t want to put it on the board, because it is going to go away. (Once again, where the heck to?) And as you progress in the sprint, this tiny niggle becomes bigger and bigger until it becomes an impediment. By the end of the sprint, you have an unhappy team because of having to deliver in a sprint while having a boulder in their shoe.

The funny thing is that the next day, after hiking to the first cabin with that awful pebble in your shoe, and narrowly escaping the wrath of the mountain goat despite it torturing you the entire time, you embark on the next day’s hike with the pebble still there.

You have, obviously, forgotten about the irritation of the pebble in your shoe, because you are up before dawn and its dark and you are tired, or the pebble has somehow become hidden in a part of your shoe that you never realised existed.

Either way, you start your day’s hike with great excitement and then, whoop, there it is - the pebble! You don’t stop at first, because it doesn’t feel that big, and it will go away… Then, when it really starts to annoy you, bam! Mountain goat! \*repeats process\*

How ridiculous is it that we so seldom say, “hokaai, stop die lorrie”, take off our shoe, and get rid of that pebble; which turns out to be no bigger than a tic-tac?

It might seem taboo to do this mid-sprint; it is, after all, against Agile principles. But the thing is that sometimes it is crucial to get rid of a small pebble before it becomes a boulder.

Yes, we might waste a bit of time, but, with the pebble gone, we can comfortably continue our hike, make it to the top of the mountain, and enjoy the view of a peaceful mountain goat grazing in the distance.