Aaron Waite — The Espionurge

Who/what is the first-person narrator? You don't have to reveal that in the beginning, but if you don't know who/what it is, figure that out first—it also seems like the narrator is aware that it's a narrator ("I'm not being cute … to be precise"; "Yes, I know that's in all capital letters … their culture"). The problem stemming from that is the issue of perspective. Are we seeing these scenes through Rason's eyes (albeit in third-person), or is there some other entity commenting on these events after the fact? There are many places where the narrator seems to have information that neither Rason nor the reader would know in the moment: "Her name was Cavataous … you should know"; "None of them wanted to get sick"; "They supposed Ed … at any point".

There are a few other spots, but if Rason already knows basic facts about Incisorians, it makes sense that he'd know what's written. Again, if this isn't through Rason's perspective, it needs to be more clear *where* this perspective exists relative to the events unfolding, and if it is through Rason's perspective, then everything written should be something he knows, perceives, or thinks.

Some of the narration is repetitive by using the same mannerisms/sayings in close proximity ("By that … mouth"; "By 'they', I don't mean the teeth"; "actually a lake of living teeth"; "actually super nice").

Verbs tenses should agree. Despite being primarily in past tense, there are a few spots where it slips into present tense: "By that, I don't mean … living teeth"; "By 'they', I don't mean the teeth"; "They're the 'they' I was referring to"; "That's really all you need to know"; "They have arms"; "Minotaurs are not good at whispering" (not necessarily an exhaustive list of all instances).

Any words used should be something that's present in the fictional world's current lexicon. Similes/metaphors are the primary culprits for this sort of inconsistency. Here are two that stood out to me: "like a puppy desperate to go outside,"; "drive-thru speaker". If this world does have people who keep puppies as pets and also has drive-thrus, this isn't a problem at all and is a neat trick for non-intrusive worldbuilding. I just wanted to point it out in case it was unintentional. The narrator/Rason shouldn't use similes like that if what they're using as a comparison doesn't exist in their world.

I don't see the need for the conversation Rason has with the Incisorians about hair. It seems out of place in the beginning, especially since it doesn't impact the following events at all. If magical hair isn't relevant to the story, I definitely would take it out. Even if Rason's magical hair is relevant at some point in the future, that information can be given to the reader at some other

point in time (and also I'm not quite sure what magical hair even means, so I think that could be better explained/shown somewhere else).

At the beginning of the story, you make it clear that the Incisorians don't have hands: "not having hands, the corpse … sloughed off". However, later in the story, it says: "Did I mention they have arms? They have arms". Do they have arms but not hands? If so, they could still use their arms to nudge bodies off their heads, right?

If Rason is being executed by these people who caught him trying to steal from them, why isn't someone monitoring the execution? He's presumably a savvy and powerful spy, so they definitely wouldn't just leave and hope he dies the way they're intending. Also, why does Rason still have his grappling hook? Wouldn't they strip him of anything he could use as a weapon or tool to break out? Someone should be making sure Rason actually dies in this execution (and why not a more conventional method of death, like decapitation, stabbing, etc.?).

I'm sure you've heard the adage "show, don't tell." In the spirit of that saying, phrases like "Yes, I know that's in all capital letters. That's how minotaurs spell it" don't need to be there, because the reader can pick up on the fact that minotaur names and dialogue are in all caps. The explanation about the minotaurs was easy to pick out, but keep an eye out for more subtle moments where you're directly telling the reader something that could be shown (or is already shown) instead.

If the Incisorians aren't normally hostile and only kill people by accident, why does Rason immediately assume the minotaurs are hostile here: "'We live on top of the minotaurs … 'Well, then. I'll have to figure something else out, then'". They're even shown to not be hostile shortly afterwards and help Rason escape, so that moment didn't make much sense to me. Even if Rason didn't know the minotaurs weren't hostile, he could always ask, "Hey, are you minotaurs going to kill me if I fall down there past the Incisorians?" If the reason is because he'd impale himself on their horns, then make that clear.

Why are the Incisorians and the minotaurs so stupid? It's never occurred to the Incisorians to move out of the way of people falling on top of them? Also, the minotaurs never thought to even *look* for a way out of the place they've been trapped in? Even so, why/how is there an escape route for them to break out in the first place? Sure, it's funny the way it's written, but it doesn't make sense.