Episode #1. Definite and Indefinite Articles

Emily: Joshua, are you worried about your privacy on the internet?
Joshua: Are you asking me about identity theft? For example, people hacking into my computer?
Emily: Not exactly. I mean keeping your privacy. Preventing people from having access to your photos on social media.
Joshua: Not really.
Emily: I just read an article about a college student in Pittsburgh. She posted a photo of herself drinking alcohol and wearing a pirate hat at a party. The caption she wrote said, “Drunken pirate.” Then, even though she was over the legal drinking age, her university denied her a degree in teaching. She was asked to leave the school.
Joshua: Really? Does the college have a right to do that?Hmm… though, I guess she shouldn’t have posted the picture in the first place.
Emily: Of course it was not wise. She’s a teacher. Posting a photo of herself drunk at a party doesn’t set a very good example for her students, does it? But at the same time, I’m sure the professors at her university have had some drinks at a party before. It seems a bit like a double standard to me.
Joshua: But they didn’t do it online.
Emily: That’s a good point. In fact, that’s exactly what the article is about. Because of social media and the internet, nothing is forgotten anymore. Once you upload a photo or post a message to social media, it never goes away. Unless you delete it.
Joshua: That’s not exactly true! Someone can save a photo before you delete it by taking a screenshot. And there’s even a website that archives old versions of webpages. So even if you delete something, it can still stay online. Forever.
Emily: I guess you just need to be very careful of what you post.
Joshua: It may not be enough.
Emily: Why?
Joshua: Because what if someone takes a photo of you at a party or a bar and uploads it to the internet? Some social media sites like Facebook have technology that can automatically identify your face and tag you.
Emily: That’s quite concerning. Though, it’s not all bad. For example, the internet is making a permanent record of what people say now. So, if a politician uses hate speech or says something inappropriate, voters will be able to see in the future.
Joshua: That’s true. But what if they say something when they’re very young? Let’s say 17, 18 years old. Then they run for office thirty years later. Can’t a person change and be forgiven?
Emily: Well, that’s a hypothetical question.
Joshua: Not at all! It has happened in the past. While running for president, Barack Obama admitted to doing drugs when he was in college. He was still elected president. Bill Clinton cheated on his wife while he was in office and still had a 70% approval rating after. Clearly, they were both forgiven by most Americans.
**Emily:** Well, Americans are generally very forgiving. For some things, a person should be given a second chance. Like for past drug or alcohol abuse. But for others, like inappropriate sexual conduct, no!

**Joshua:** Emily, you know, I just thought of something funny... I bet the person who will become the President of the United States in thirty years is a college student posting a picture on Instagram right now, as we speak.