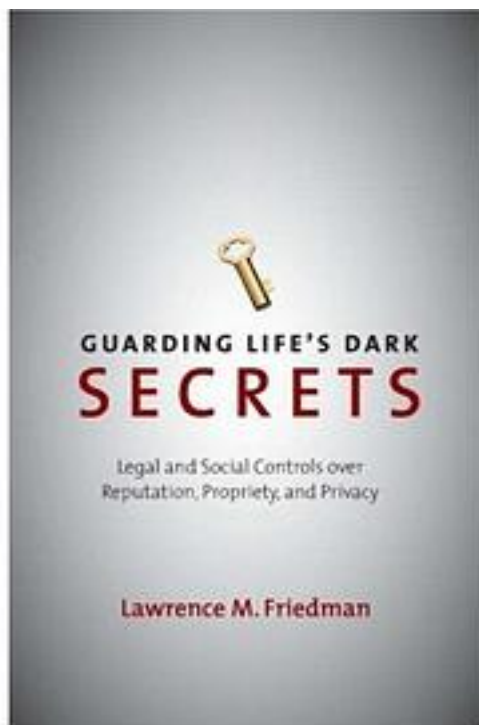


Guarding Life's Dark Secrets



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Guarding Life's Dark Secrets tells the story of an intriguing aspect of the social and legal culture in the United States, the construction and destruction of a network of doctrines designed to protect reputation. The strict and unbending rules of decency and propriety of the nineteenth century, especially concerning sexual behavior, paradoxically provided ways to protect and shield respectable men and women who deviated from the official norms. This "Victorian compromise," which created an important zone of privacy, first came under attack from moralists for its tolerance of sin. During the second half of the twentieth century, the old structure was largely dismantled by an increasingly permissive society.

Rich with anecdotes, Friedman's account draws us into the present. The Supreme Court has interpreted the Constitution to include a right of privacy, which has given ordinary people increased freedom, especially in matters of sex, reproduction, and choice of intimate partners. The elite, however, no longer have the freedom they once had to violate decency rules with impunity. Although public figures may have lost some of their privacy rights, ordinary people have gained more privacy, greater leeway, and broader choices. These gains, however, are now under threat as technology transforms the modern world into a world of surveillance.

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目录:

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