



By Cynthia Kraack

## About ASHWOOD

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*ASHWOOD* explores the challenges of rebuilding a country in the aftermath of complete economic collapse. How will citizens relate to a government which must evolve into the primary provider of food, housing and jobs? What happens with traditional social institutions such as marriage and parenthood, when they become contractual responsibilities administered by agencies? Is it possible for a gargantuan bureaucracy to control all its individual entities? And how do regular people influence the new way of life?

In 2035, years after the lowest point of a global economic depression, Anne Hartford arrives at her first government-assigned position managing a small slice of the newly created United States economy: an agricultural estate created by demolition of former suburban housing. On this land Anne must raise agricultural produce to send to the Twin Cities marketplace, feed dozens of adults and children connected to the estate, and earn enough money to continue Ashwood's development. A former schoolteacher caught in the government's unemployed roundups; she hopes that intense federal retraining will carry her through a first year of estate management.

A sinister undertow created by Anne's predecessor threatens the health of dozens of child workers and accelerates the emotional instability of the intellectually elite couple who call the estate home. Everyone's future is jeopardized. She must untangle deceptive relationships to free the estate's business operations from a corrupt bureaucrat, gain the confidence of Tia and David Regan as they welcome their first child; and find the means to feed Ashwood's inhabitants in a world where food is scarce. As a woman who lost her entire family and her dreams, the estate can either threaten Anne's emotional recovery or be the place where she rediscovers the ability to hope, build and dream of a better future for herself and the people of Ashwood.

Cynthia Kraack is the author of *Minnesota Cold*, winner of the 2010 NEMBA for Fiction. *Minnesota Cold* was released by North Star Press in 2009

"Combining elements of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Jane Eyre*, *Ashwood* presents a vision of the future that is familiar and chilling. When the resourceful heroine arrives to manage the mysterious Ashwood estate, which is both a farm and a children's home, she finds the food stores are low and the children underfed. But this is just the start of her challenges...Matron Anne must decipher friend from foe. A definite page turner." David Mura, author of *Famous Suicides of the Japanese Empire*