ANDREW MARR:
Anyway, it’s been a horrible week for UKIP as well. Nigel Farage kept his promise to stand down as leader if he failed to become an MP, but he was back within days blowing open simmering tensions at the top of the party. So can senior figures overcome their differences? I’m joined by the UKIP Deputy Chairman Suzanne Evans. Welcome to you.

SUZANNE EVANS:
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR:
Can you start … Before we get going, explain to me exactly what the problems are inside UKIP. Who hates who and why?

SUZANNE EVANS:
I don’t think anyone hates anyone. I generally don’t. I think we’ve had some problem with some advisers around Nigel who very much kept him in their pocket, if you like, and I think he’s had too much influence from them. But they’ve gone now …
ANDREW MARR:
And they have now gone?

SUZANNE EVANS:
Well, certainly, Raheem Kassam has gone. I gather he’s … He’s kind of fallen on his feet really, I think. He’s taken a job with Breitbart - this far right Tea Party American shock and awe style publication. I think he’ll be right at home.

ANDREW MARR:
And was that the problem? Was that the problem with them – they were too aggressive? There was the quote from Patrick O’Flynn about the leader being think-skinned, aggressive and shouty or whatever it was.

SUZANNE EVANS:
I think actually what Patrick was trying to say – and he has told me in private conversations that I think he was slightly misquoted – that what he was talking about was Nigel’s public image, rather than Nigel himself, and clearly there’s a big distinction to be made there.

ANDREW MARR:
So what was the problem with these advisers?

SUZANNE EVANS:
Well I think they were trying to take the party back to, perhaps, what it was several years ago. I think if you look at the manifesto – and let’s not forget that I wrote the manifesto and I think it was very compassionate, very centre-ground, very balanced – and Nigel called it, bless him, the best manifesto ever written, which was a great sort of feather in my cap. And that I think is where he wants to take the party and where the party needs to be going.

ANDREW MARR:
But there was a period when UKIP seemed to be too aggressive and Nigel Farage at the top of UKIP was coming across as too aggressive. Is that really what you’re saying?
SUZANNE EVANS:
Well I think you know we have to make a distinction here, don’t we, about where we need to go forward as a party? Nigel talked very much about the “shy kipper” in this campaign when the opinion polls were coming out; that he was saying there were people who were shy, who weren’t telling the opinion pollsters that they were UKIP voters. And I think there is an issue there that we have to answer about, well, why are these people shy? If we’ve got it absolutely right and if our party brand is actually working at the moment, why don’t people want to sing and dance about it?

ANDREW MARR:
Was it stuff like you know keep people with HIV out of the country, that kind of rather aggressive, slightly uncaring aspect of UKIP which came across? Was that the problem?

SUZANNE EVANS:
There’s a very serious debate to be had about health tourism, but there are ways and means of saying it, aren’t there, and this is certainly a subject that UKIP isn’t going to shy away from in future.

ANDREW MARR:
What does it say about your leader that he can be in the pocket of people like Mr Kassam?

SUZANNE EVANS:
Well perhaps he wasn’t in their pocket. But you know people … you pay advisers to give you advice. And I’ve worked in PR and marketing and you give advice to people and they either take it or they don’t, and I obviously wasn’t privy to conversations. But you know I think we can really move on from this. I think it’s a real shame. We actually have so much to be proud of. We quadrupled our vote. We should be patting each other on the backs, not sharpening the knives. And I think there’s been an awful lot of testosterone running around this week and I think now people will be able to calm down a bit and we can move forward.
ANDREW MARR:
Do you think it would have been better for UKIP and perhaps better for Nigel Farage if he’d taken a bit of a break at this point?

SUZANNE EVANS:
Yes. And Douglas Carswell has said that he does hope he still takes a break. And let me be absolutely clear. I have spoken to Douglas and people have been reading too much into that statement. He means purely …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) So this is not take a break and leave politics forever?

SUZANNE EVANS:
Absolutely not. No nobody wants Nigel to go.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) But he’s been under huge pressure. He …

SUZANNE EVANS:
(over) He’s a fantastic leader, a great political communicator. He has done wonders for UKIP. Look at where he has got us to just in the last five years. As I say, you know, we were 3 per cent in the General Election. We’re now 14 per cent. And I think if we can diversify the party a little bit, professionalise and make it more inclusive. There are whole rafts of people there who we’re not appealing to at the moment. Women. You know our ratings, we’re 4 per cent less for women. Ethnic minorities …

ANDREW MARR:
Sure, I want to come onto that but I just want to finish with Nigel Farage. How long a break do you think he should take?

SUZANNE EVANS:
Oh, I think a couple of weeks.
Oh no more than that? Okay.

**SUZANNE EVANS:**
(over) Have a holiday. Have a holiday, Nigel. You know everyone needs a holiday. It’s been such a tough time.

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) And when you read that he wants to stay in until 2035, does that lift your heart or do you think I hope it’s a joke?

**SUZANNE EVANS:**
(laughs) I think it’s a joke, I think it’s a joke. Nobody … He’s done this for 23 years. Inevitably there’s …

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) And the trouble with a one-man band is that if you lose the bandsman where’s the music?

**SUZANNE EVANS:**
Well this is exactly it, isn’t it? Nigel is the last person that wants to have UKIP as a one-man band and that’s why I was very careful in the manifesto to make sure that it had not just quotes and policy from all our spokesmen, that they were photoed in the manifesto as well. It isn’t a one-man band. And you know a good leader – particularly of an organisation like UKIP, which has grown phenomenally quickly in a very short period of time – you have to take feedback, you have to actually solicit feedback.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Sure, sure.

**SUZANNE EVANS:**
And I’m sure that’s what we were doing. We have got to look at why we only got one Member of Parliament. And of course that Member of Parliament will have to be included in debate. He’s the one we got across the line. So what is it about his message, about his tone that actually got him through?
ANDREW MARR:
Sure. And your message now to your colleagues: enough of all of that …

SUZANNE EVANS:
Yeah.

ANDREW MARR:
… enough already, belt up?

SUZANNE EVANS:
Absolutely, I think so. You know, as I say, we’ve already made great strides in UKIP. If we can put our differences aside and, as I say, have that meeting about where we could have done better, then I think we’re unstoppable.

ANDREW MARR:
Sure, okay.

SUZANNE EVANS:
Thirteen per cent in the polls. As I say, a huge voting public out there to access.

ANDREW MARR:
Fraser Nelson was arguing that the big issue for you of course is the EU referendum. And there are a lot of people who don’t want to see Nigel Farage as the main voice – you know the identified leader of the out campaign (Evans laughs) – because he is a bit of a marmite politician. Even you know that.

SUZANNE EVANS:
Well how very high-minded of them.

ANDREW MARR:
No …

SUZANNE EVANS:
I think they need to remember that actually there would be no EU referendum if it wasn’t for UKIP and if it wasn’t for Nigel Farage because David Cameron was point blank refusing to have one for many years; and UKIP and Nigel, with his strong leadership, pushed him into that position. And I know you’ve got Andy Burnham on later. I hope you give him a bit of hard time. I gather he’s saying that we should have an EU referendum now, so a bit late.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) I’m going to be very, very interested to know how his views have, as they say, evolved. But for now, Suzanne Evans …

SUZANNE EVANS:
Thank you.

ANDREW MARR:
… thank you very much indeed for joining us.

INTERVIEW ENDS