DOGGEREL (answer)
by Gordon Dow

The poem is actually a sequence of conjoined palindromes of varying length:

It was not I, Piton saw ti (19)

m (1)

e fly. Maid sees diamyl fe (20)

es. Paler, I relapse (15)

Ms. panda-doodad naps. M (18)

o (1)

na spays, Toots, yaps—an (18)

awkwa (5)

rd gaze. No one zag! Dr (16)

owning, I sign in wo (15)

bb (2)

le-slag, Gals el (12)

e (1)

ct a career, a catc (14)

h to Nikki, not h (12)

ere! Manikin, a mere (15)

model I assailed Om (16)

nilin (5)

gual, I de-tooted, I laug (18)

h (1)

ed, I wailed Delia, wide (18)

and, er, uninured, na (15)

rrow, I yodeled "Oy!" I, worr (20)

y (1)

-drowned—lo! Golden word! (19)

The lengths, when converted to numbers, yield:

SATOR AREPO BLANK OPERA ROTAS

This is a famous ancient palindrome, when BLANK is replaced with the answer:

TENET