

Sorting lists — work and span revisited

15-150

Lecture 8: September 18, 2025

Stephanie Balzer

Carnegie Mellon University

Announcement: midterm I

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When and where:

- Thursday, **September 25, 11:00am—12:20pm.**
- **PH 100** (Section **A-I**), **MM Breed Hall** (Section **J-L**).

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Be on time; next
lecture starts at 12:30pm!

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Scope:

- Lectures: 1—8.
- Labs: 1—4 and midterm review section of Lab 5.
- Assignments: Basics, Induction, and Datatypes.

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What you may have on your desk:

- Writing utensils, something to drink/eat, tissues.
- 8.5" x 11" cheatsheet (back and front), handwritten or typeset.
- No cell phones, laptops, or any other smart devices.

Let's get started with sorting: insertion sort

Sorting

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Useful datatype:

`datatype` order = LESS | EQUAL | GREATER

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Eg:

`Int.compare` : `int` * `int` -> order

`String.compare` : `string` * `string` -> order

Sorting

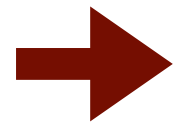
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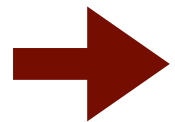


What does it mean to be sorted?

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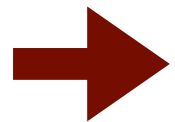
Eg, for lists of integers:

A list of integers is **sorted** iff each integer in the list is **no greater** than all integers that occur to its **right**.

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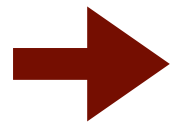
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`[... , x, ..., y, ...]`

Sorting

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`datatype` `order` = `LESS` | `EQUAL` | `GREATER`



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`LESS` | `EQUAL`

A diagram showing a list element comparison. A red curved arrow points from the element 'x' to the element 'y' in the list [... , x, ..., y, ...].

[... , x, ..., y, ...]

Warm-up: insertion sort for int lists

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(* ins : int * int list -> int list
   REQUIRES: L is sorted
   ENSURES: ins(x, L) evaluates to sorted permutation of x::L
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$W_{\text{ins}}(0) =$

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$$W_{\text{ins}}(0) = C_0$$

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Work: $W_{\text{ins}}(n)$ with n the list length.

Equations:

$$W_{\text{ins}}(0) = C_0$$

$$W_{\text{ins}}(n) = C_1 + W_{\text{ins}}(n-1), \text{ for first case clause}$$

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Consequently: $W_{\text{ins}}(n)$ is $O(n)$.

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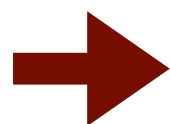
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b/c spec asserts
permutation

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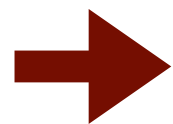
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Can we do better?

Divide and conquer: mergesort

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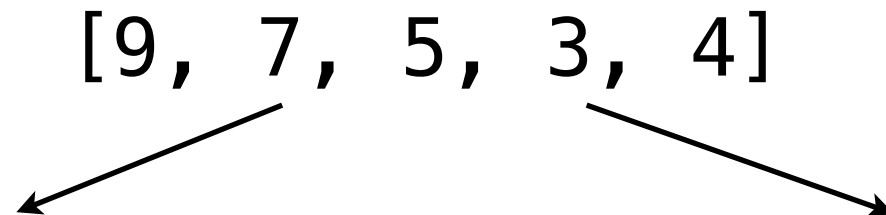
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Divide the list into approximate halves:

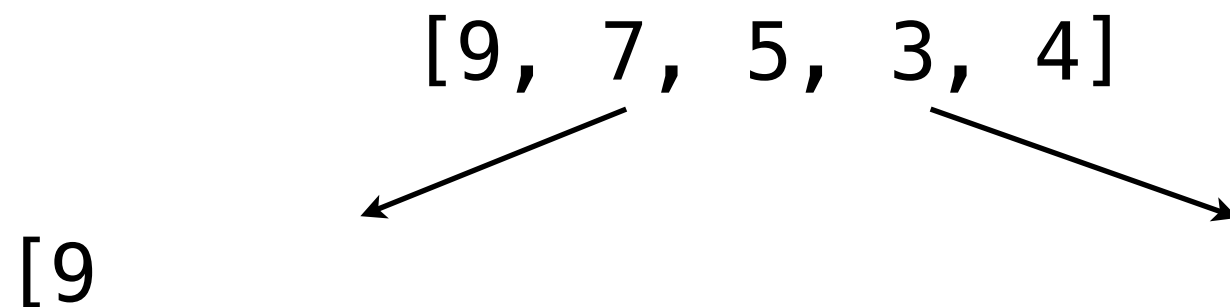


Mergesort: divide and conquer

Suppose, I want to **sort** the list

[9, 7, 5, 3, 4]

Divide the list into approximate halves:

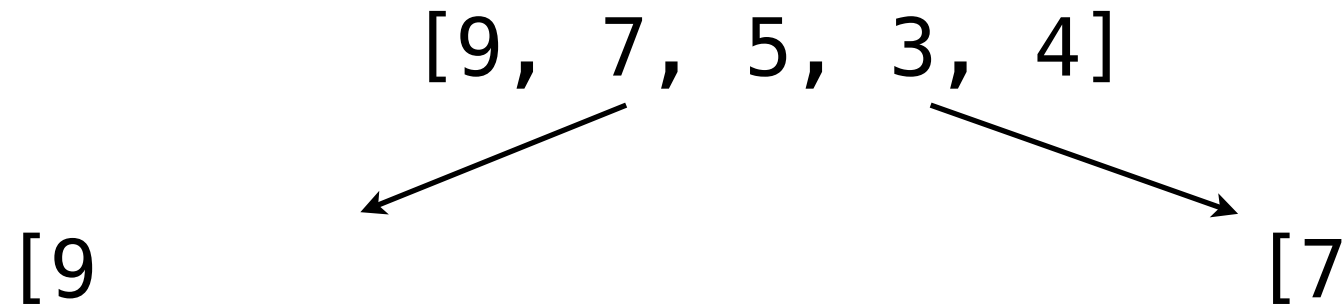


Mergesort: divide and conquer

Suppose, I want to **sort** the list

[9, 7, 5, 3, 4]

Divide the list into approximate halves:

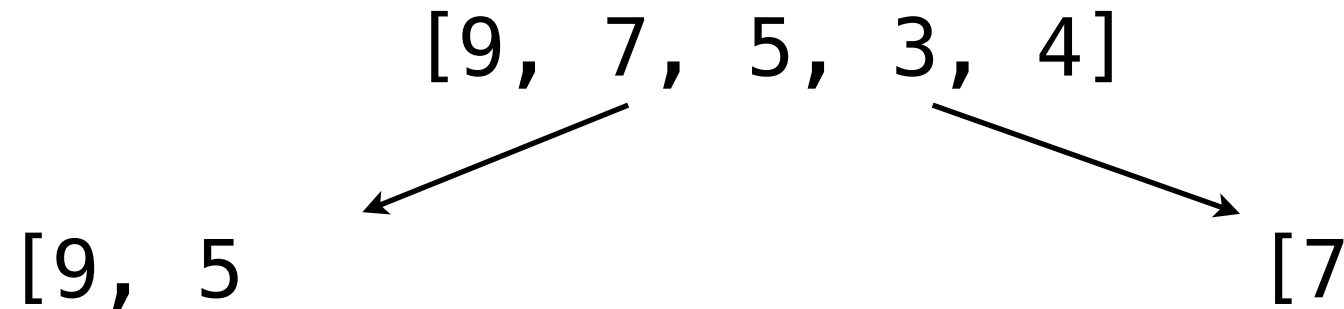


Mergesort: divide and conquer

Suppose, I want to **sort** the list

[9, 7, 5, 3, 4]

Divide the list into approximate halves:

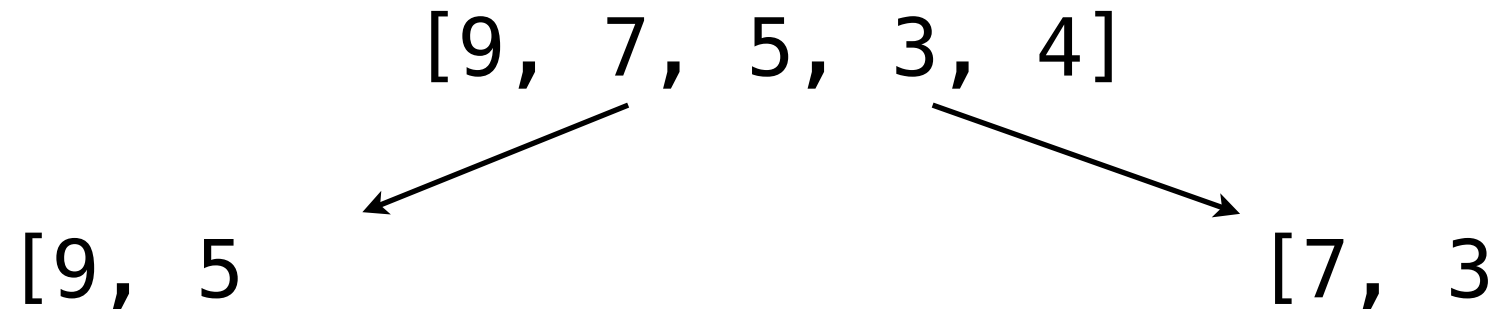


Mergesort: divide and conquer

Suppose, I want to **sort** the list

[9, 7, 5, 3, 4]

Divide the list into approximate halves:

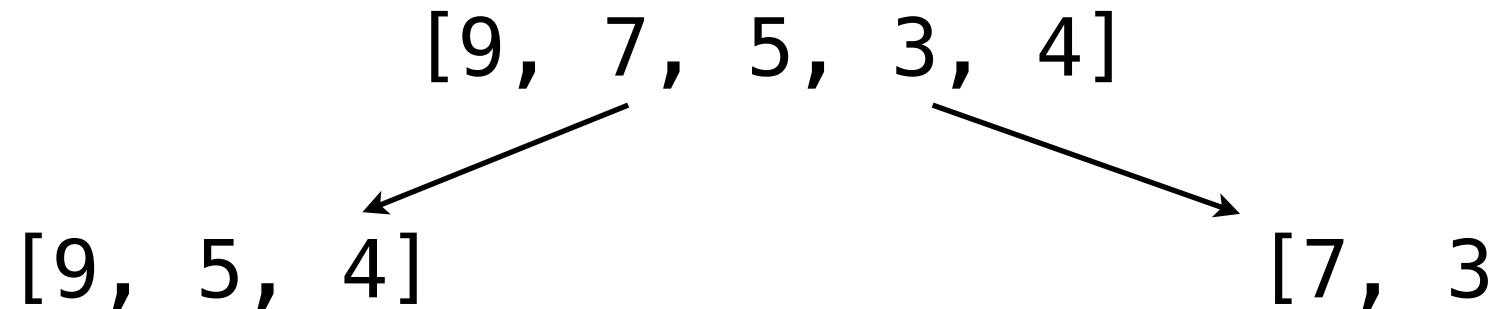


Mergesort: divide and conquer

Suppose, I want to **sort** the list

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Divide the list into approximate halves:

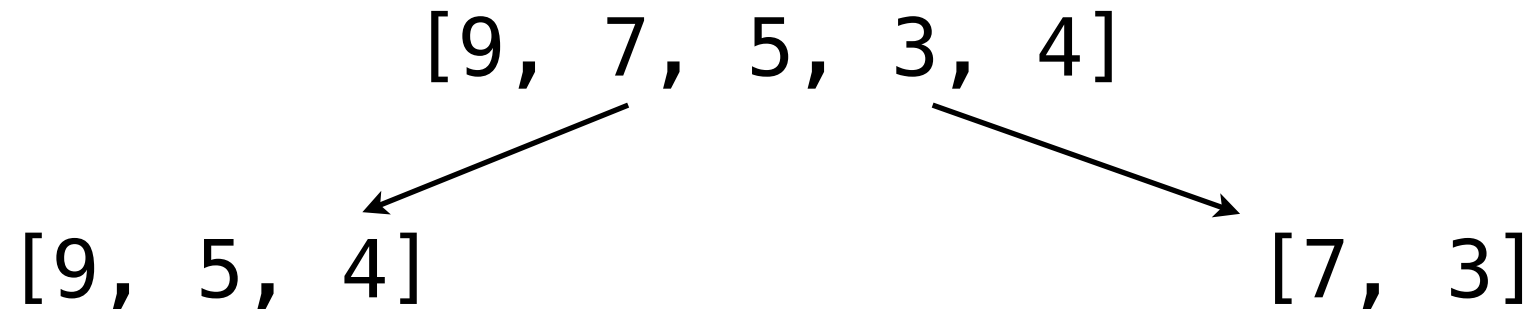


Mergesort: divide and conquer

Suppose, I want to **sort** the list

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Divide the list into approximate halves:

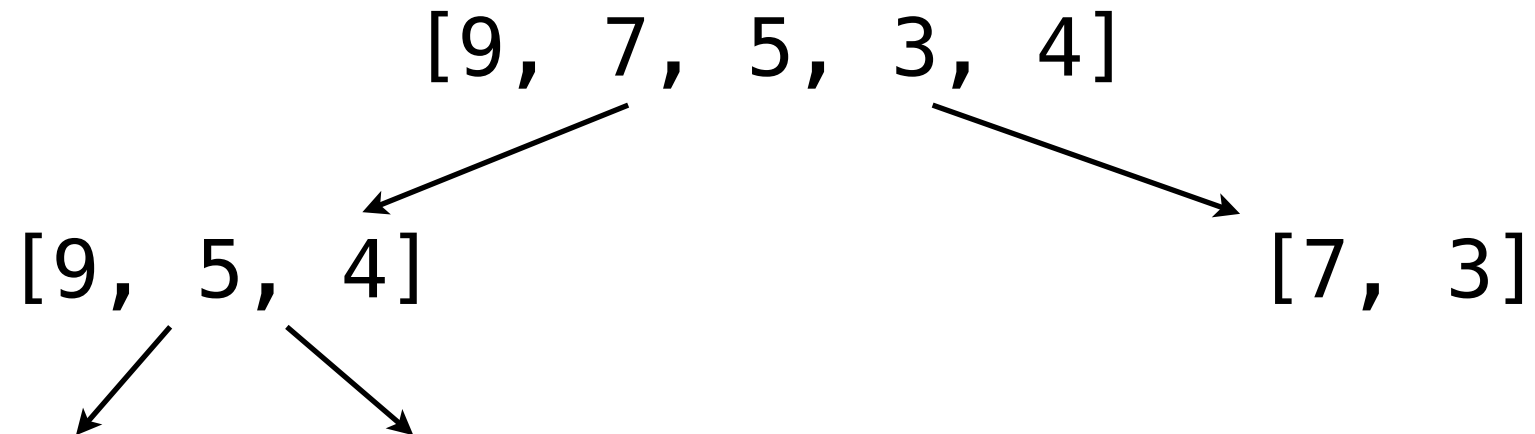


Mergesort: divide and conquer

Suppose, I want to **sort** the list

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Divide the list into approximate halves:

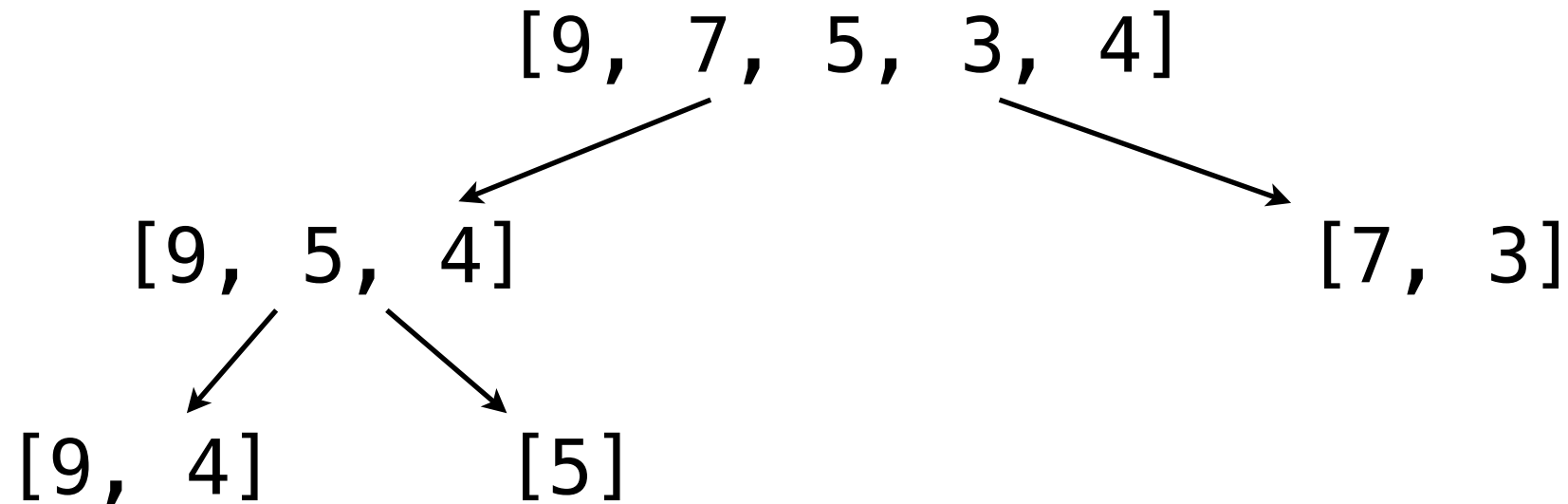


Mergesort: divide and conquer

Suppose, I want to **sort** the list

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Divide the list into approximate halves:

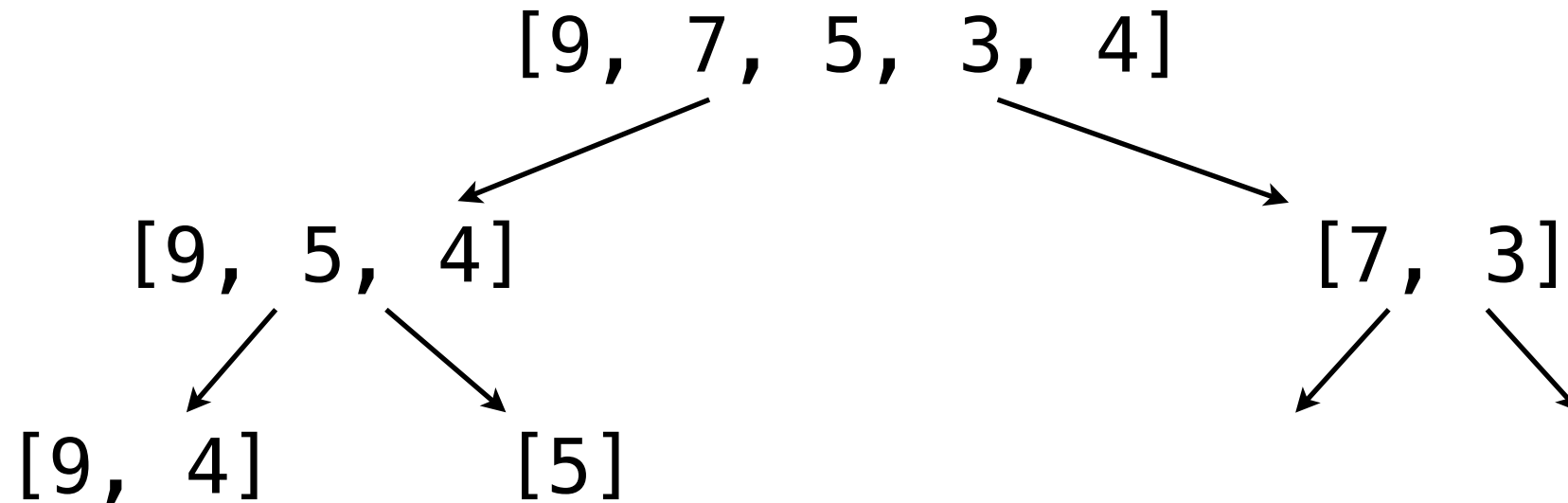


Mergesort: divide and conquer

Suppose, I want to **sort** the list

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Divide the list into approximate halves:

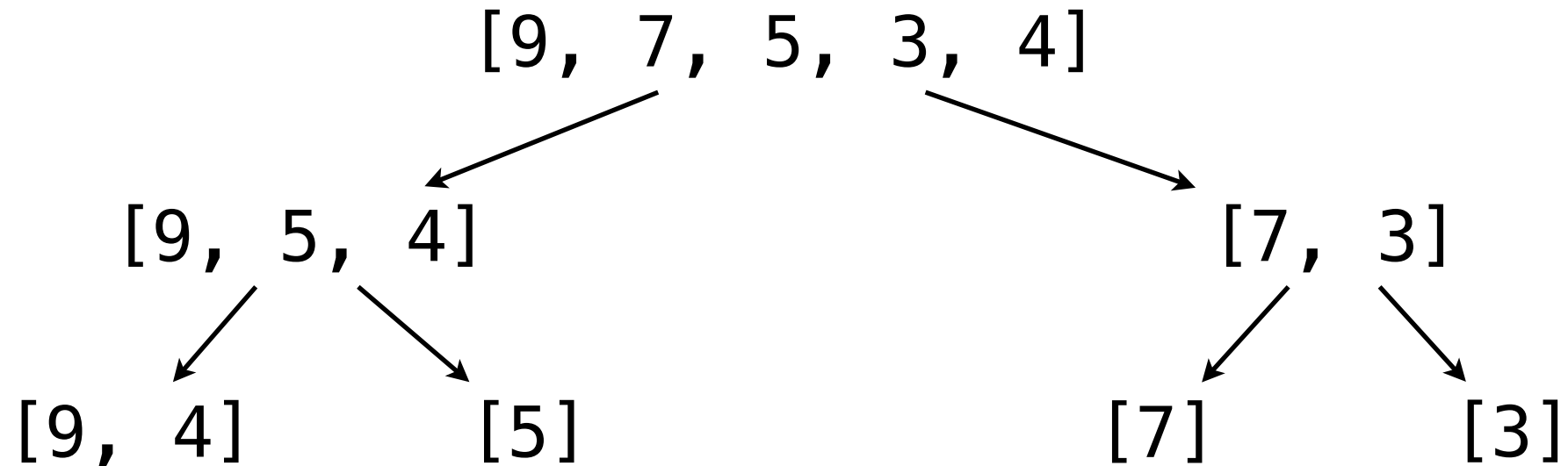


Mergesort: divide and conquer

Suppose, I want to **sort** the list

[9, 7, 5, 3, 4]

Divide the list into approximate halves:

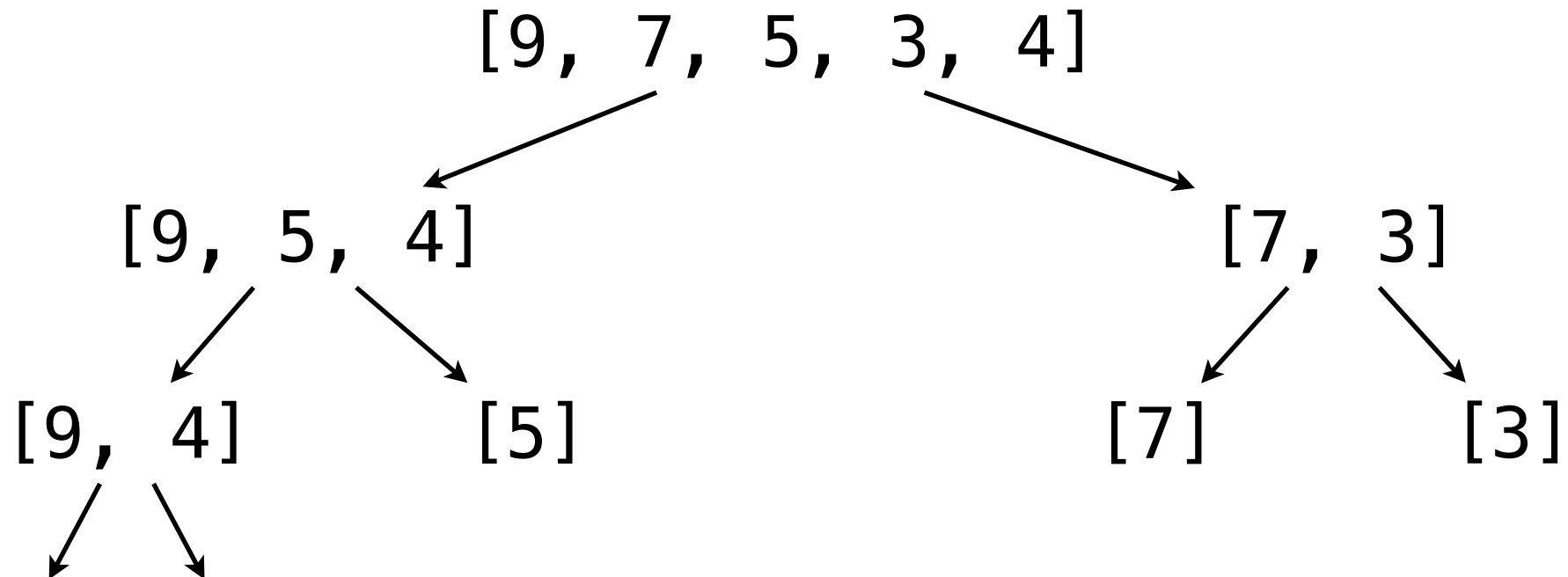


Mergesort: divide and conquer

Suppose, I want to **sort** the list

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Divide the list into approximate halves:

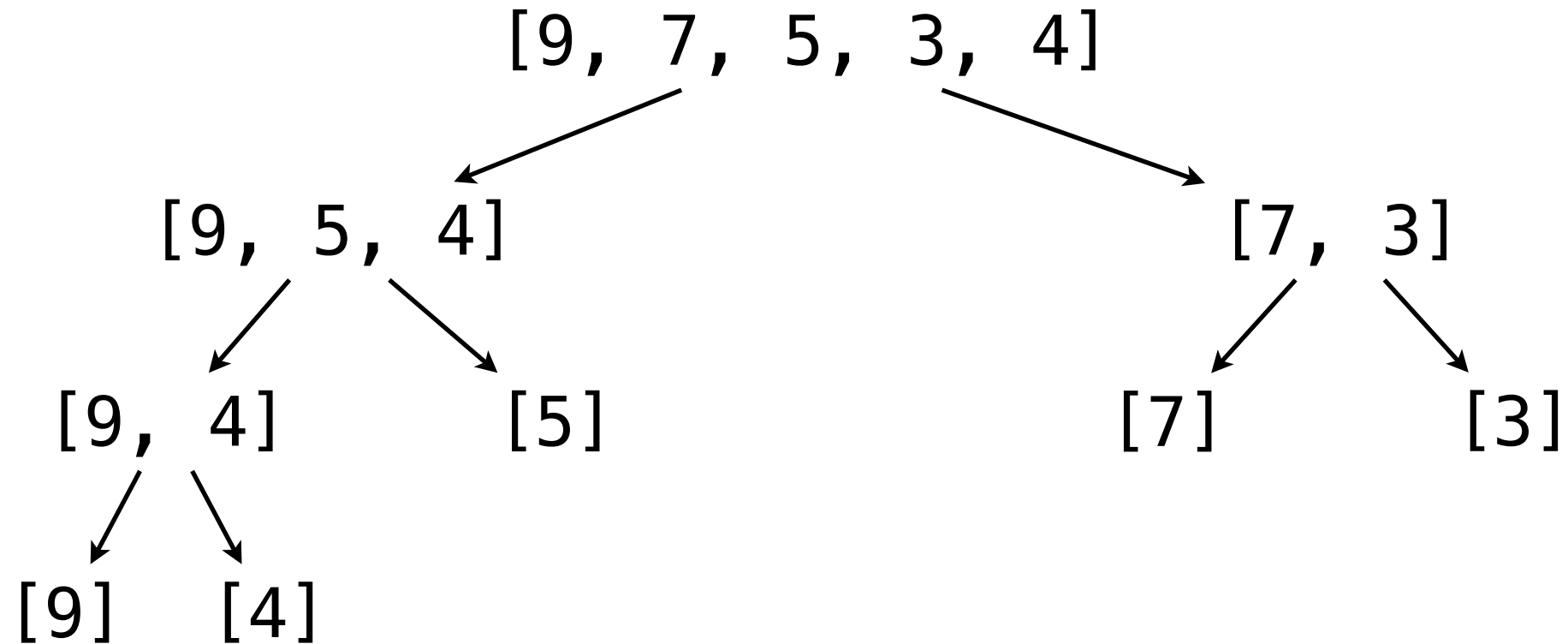


Mergesort: divide and conquer

Suppose, I want to **sort** the list

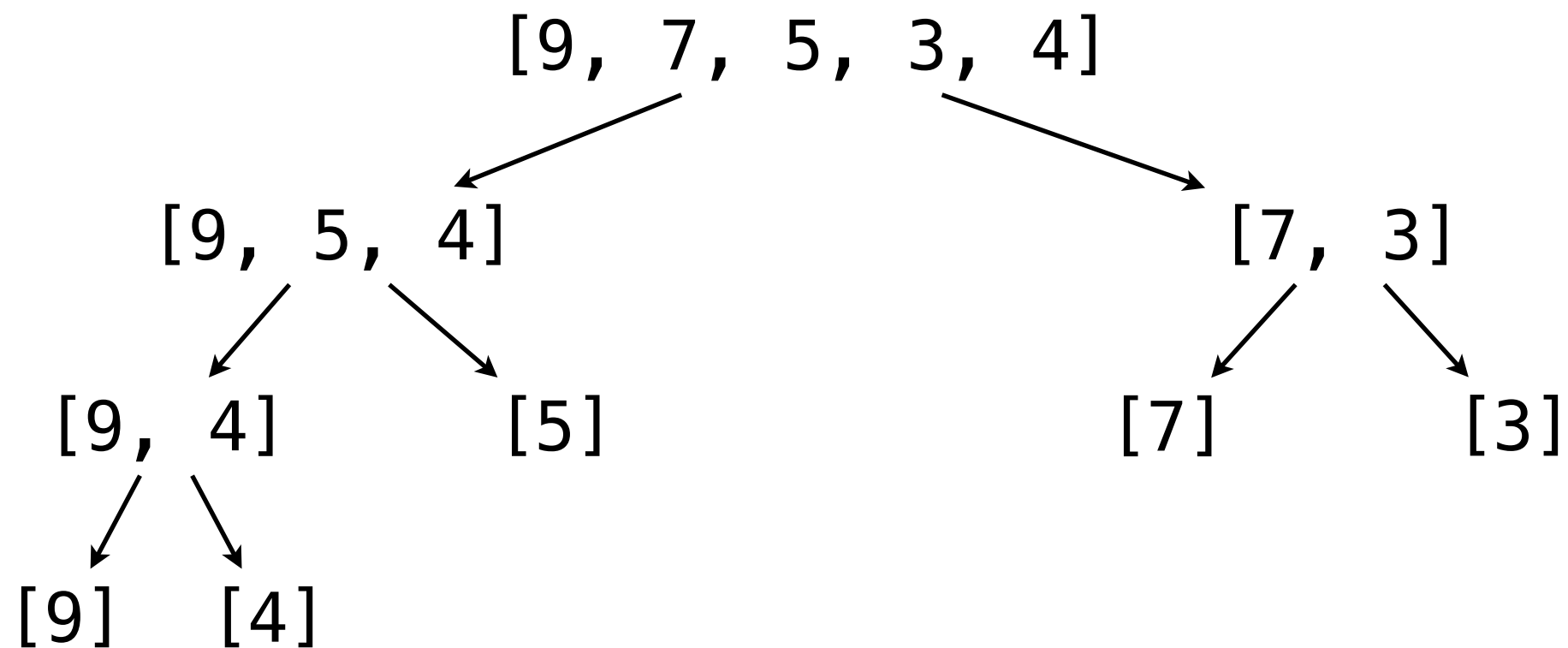
[9, 7, 5, 3, 4]

Divide the list into approximate halves:



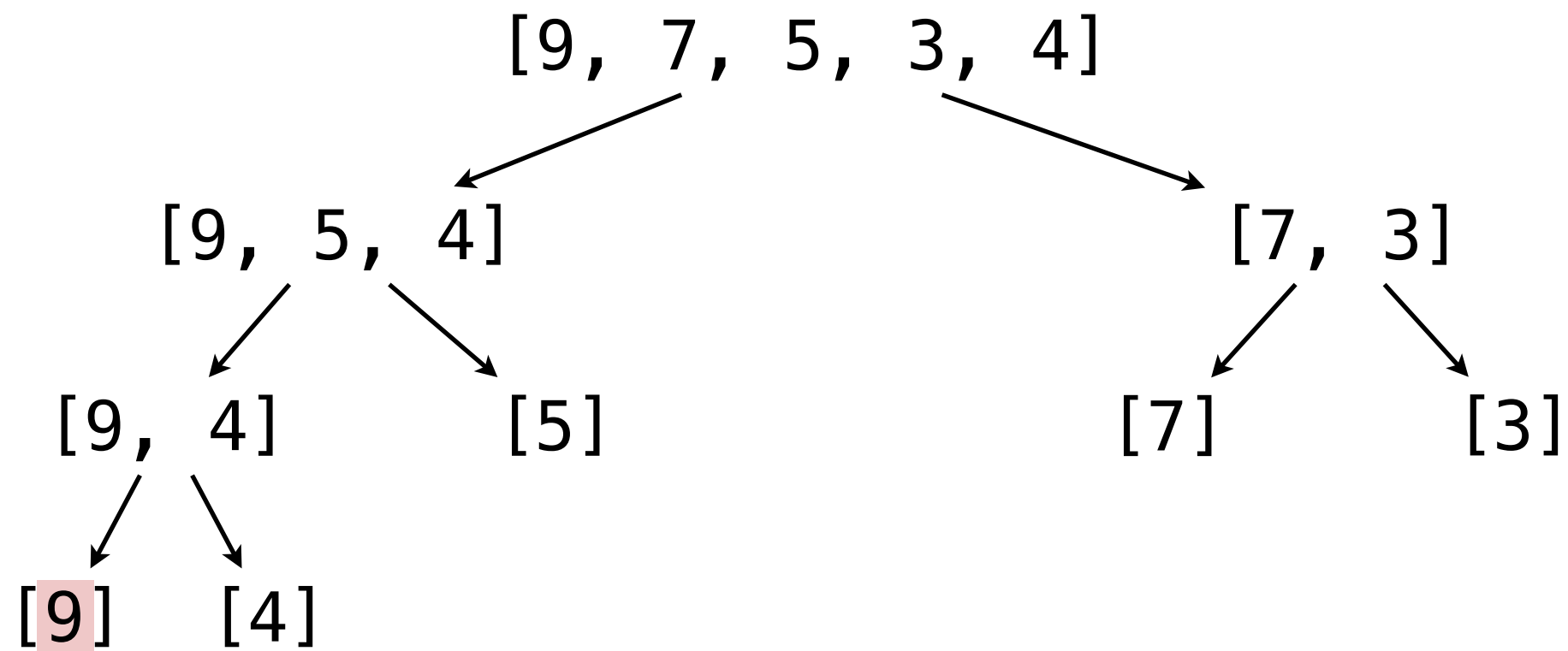
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



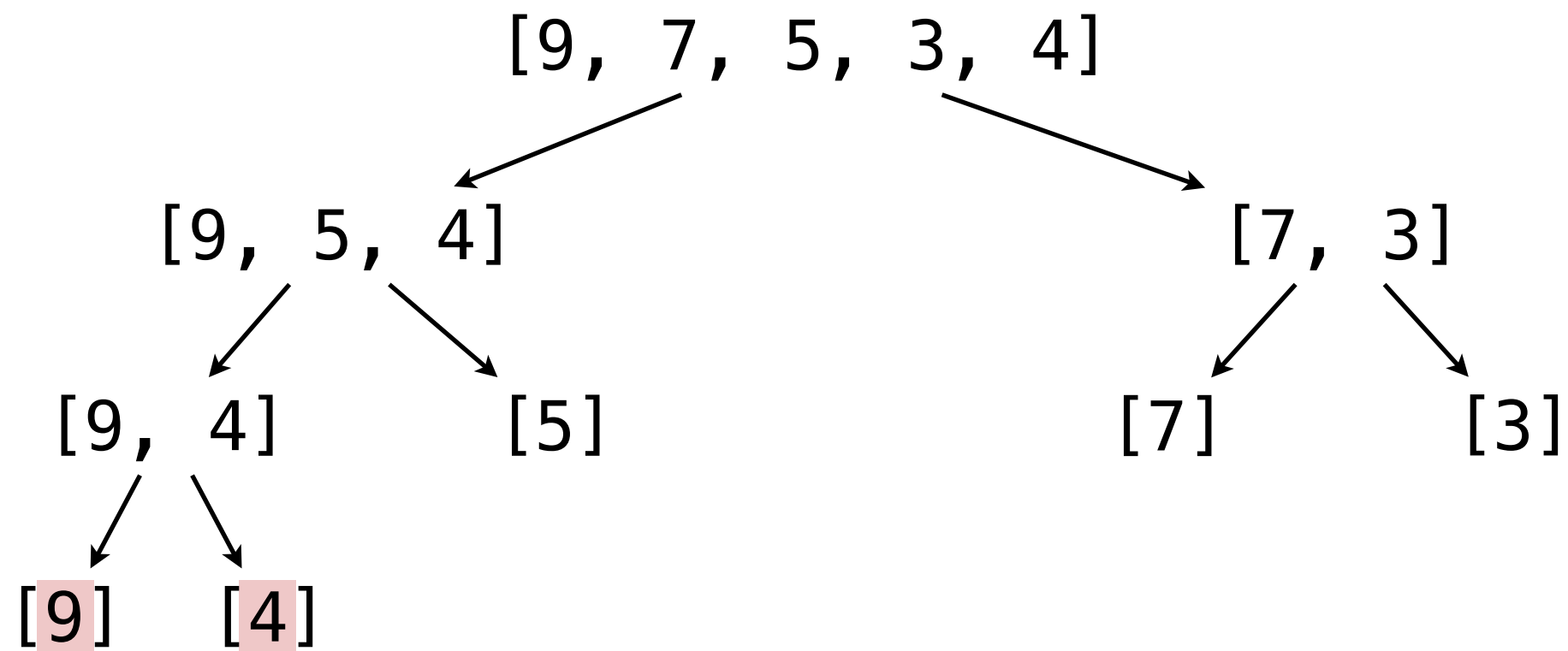
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



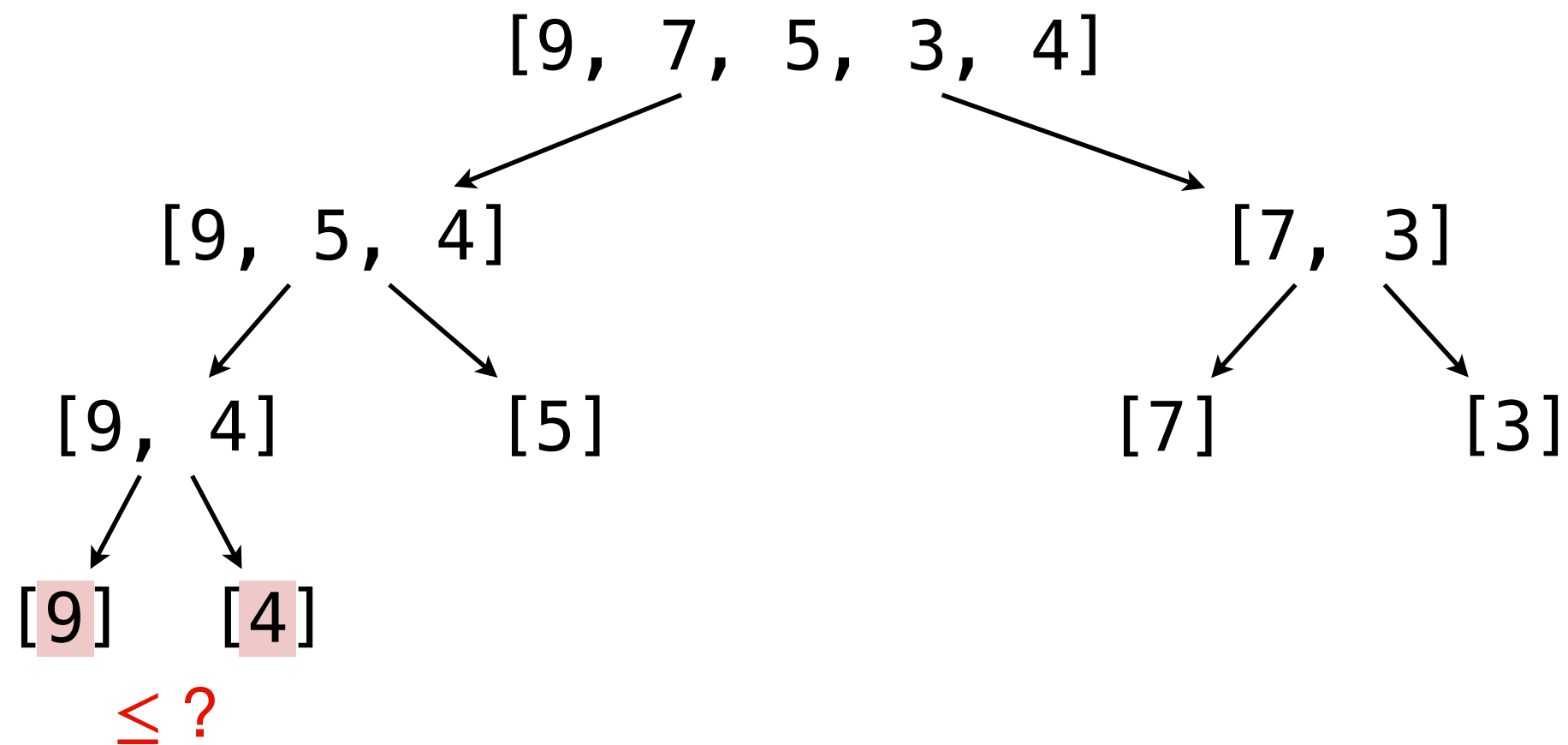
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



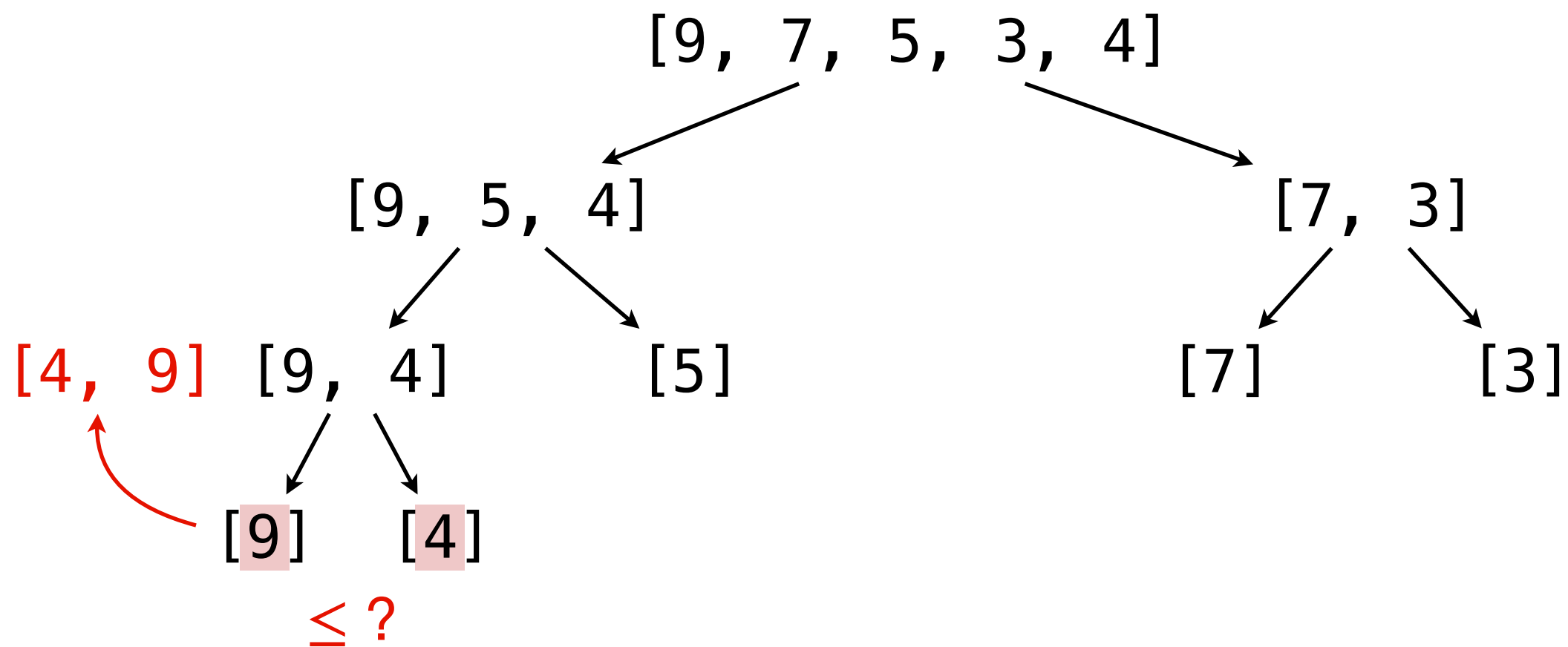
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



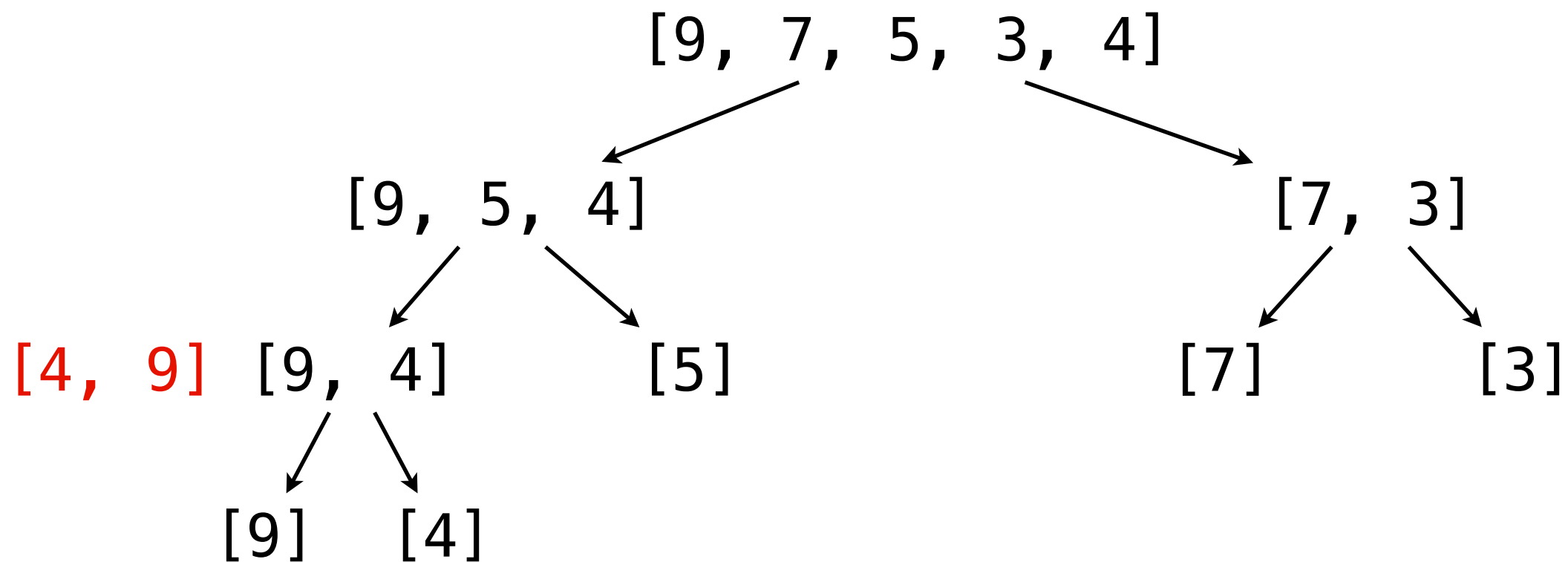
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



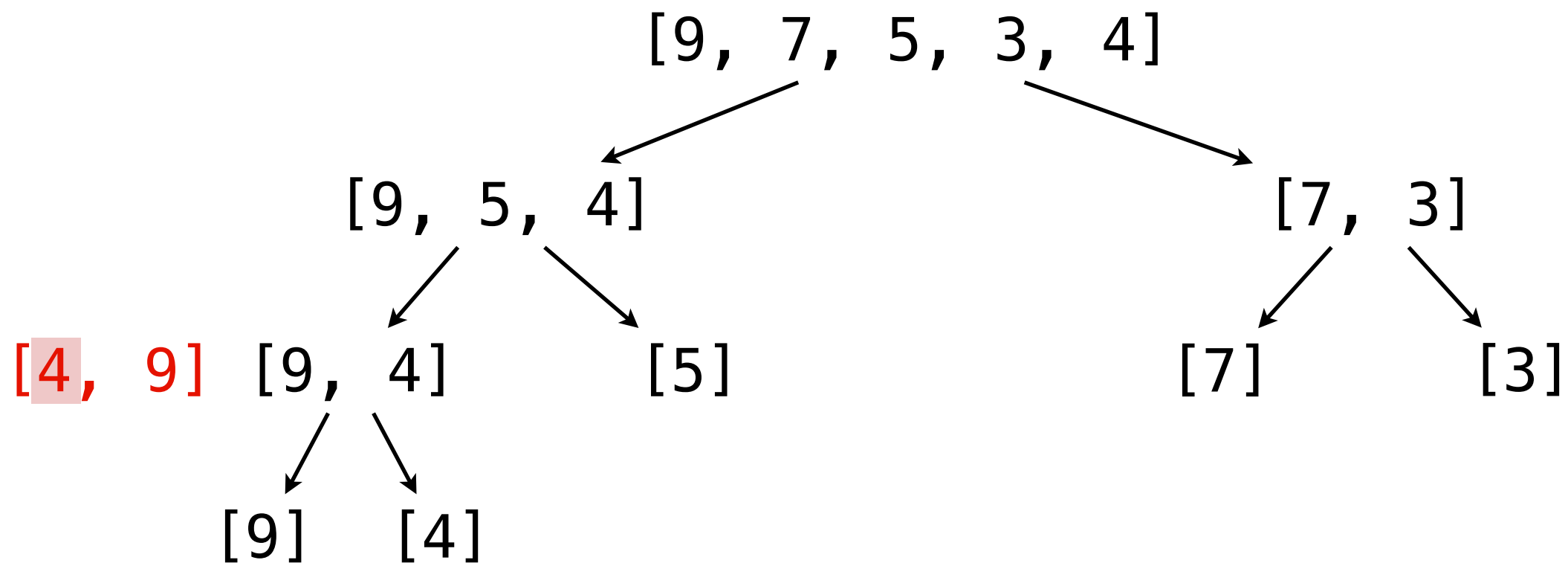
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



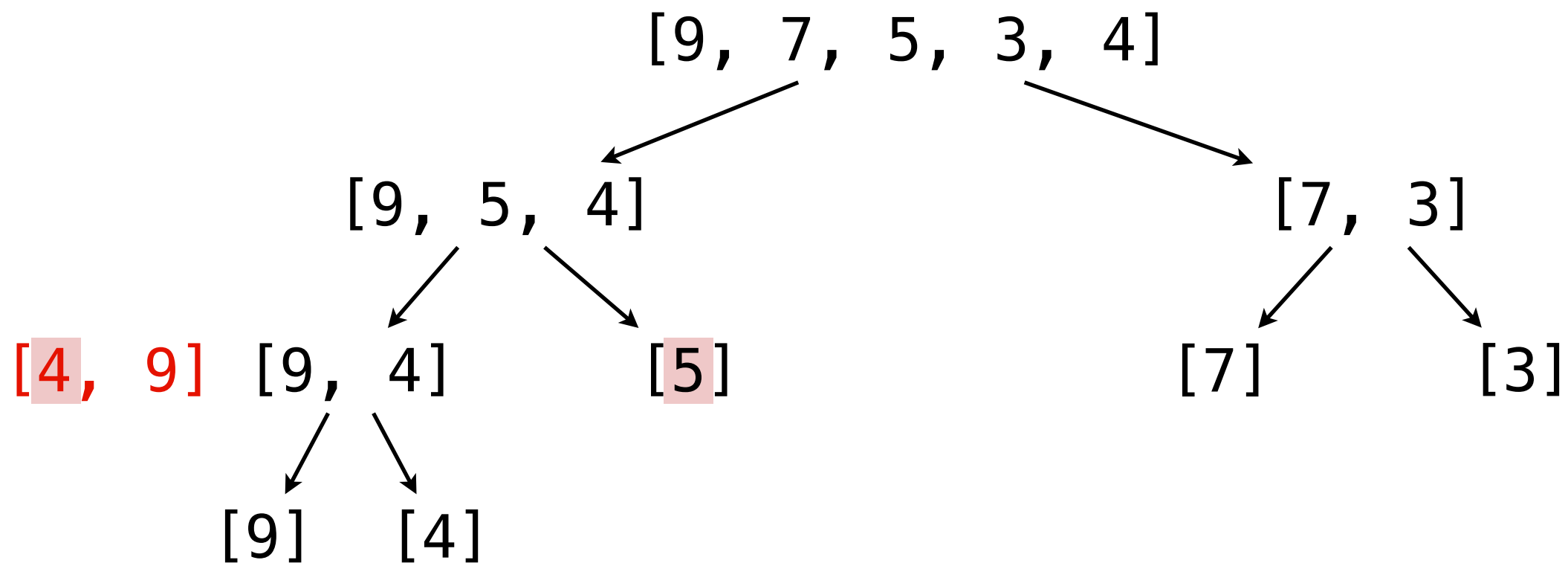
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



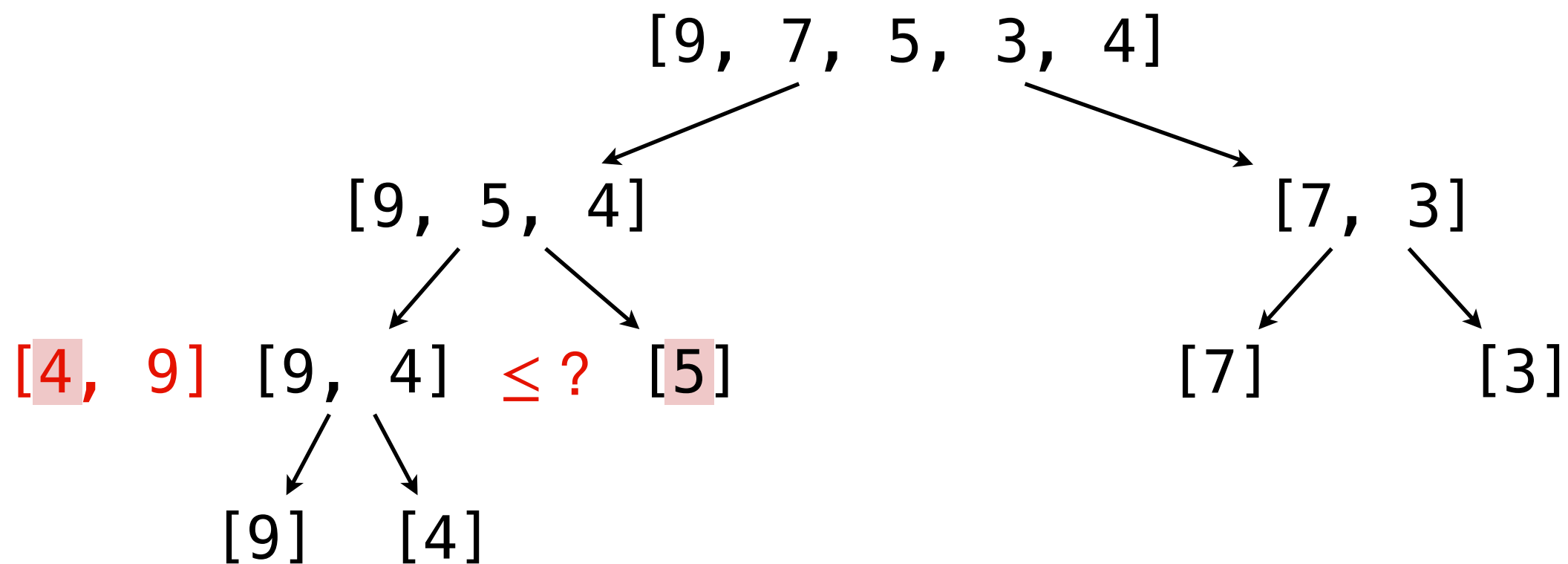
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



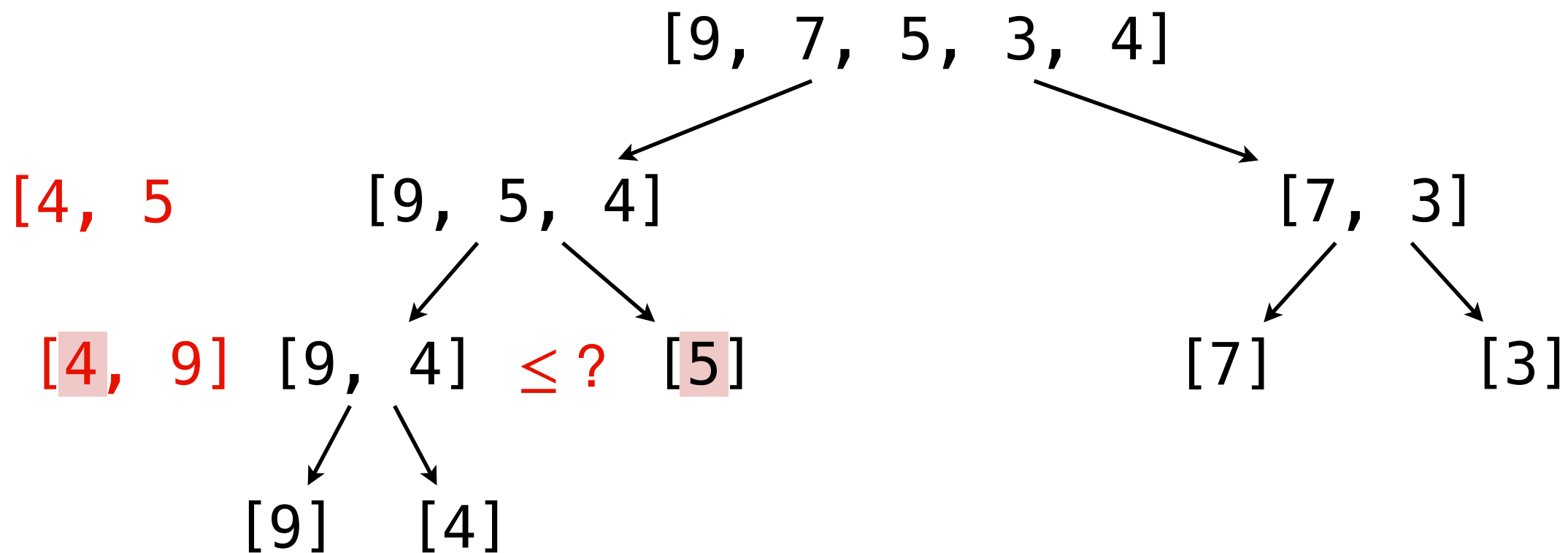
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



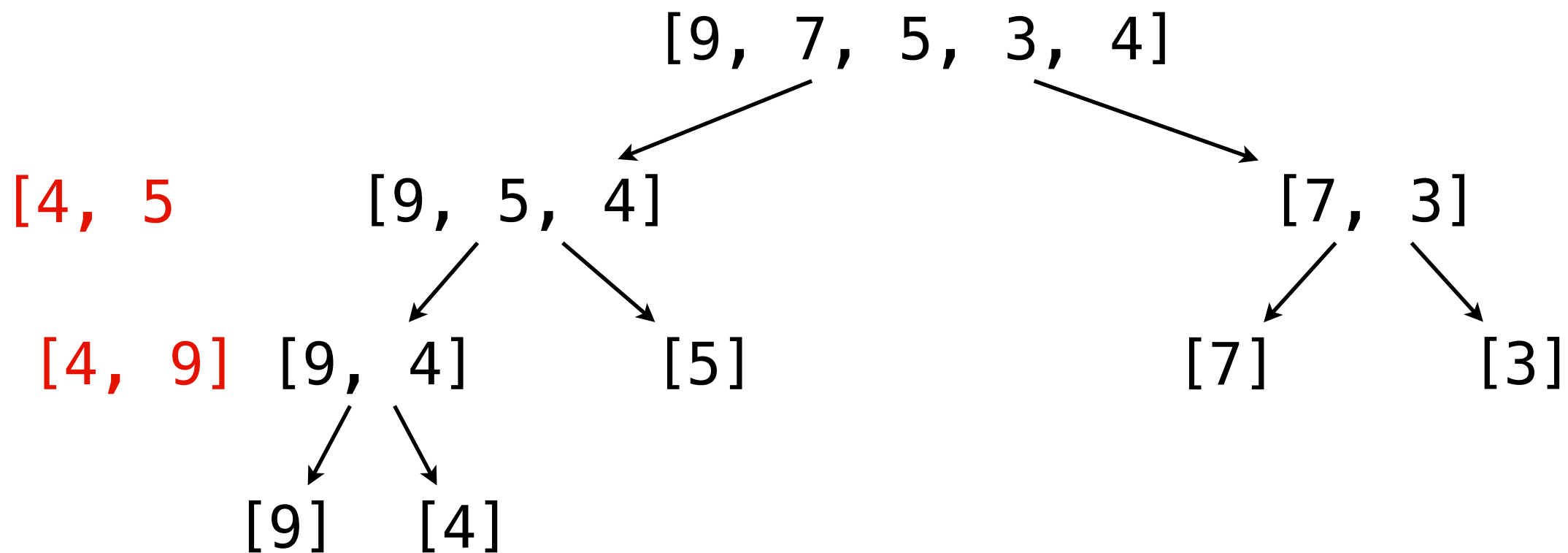
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



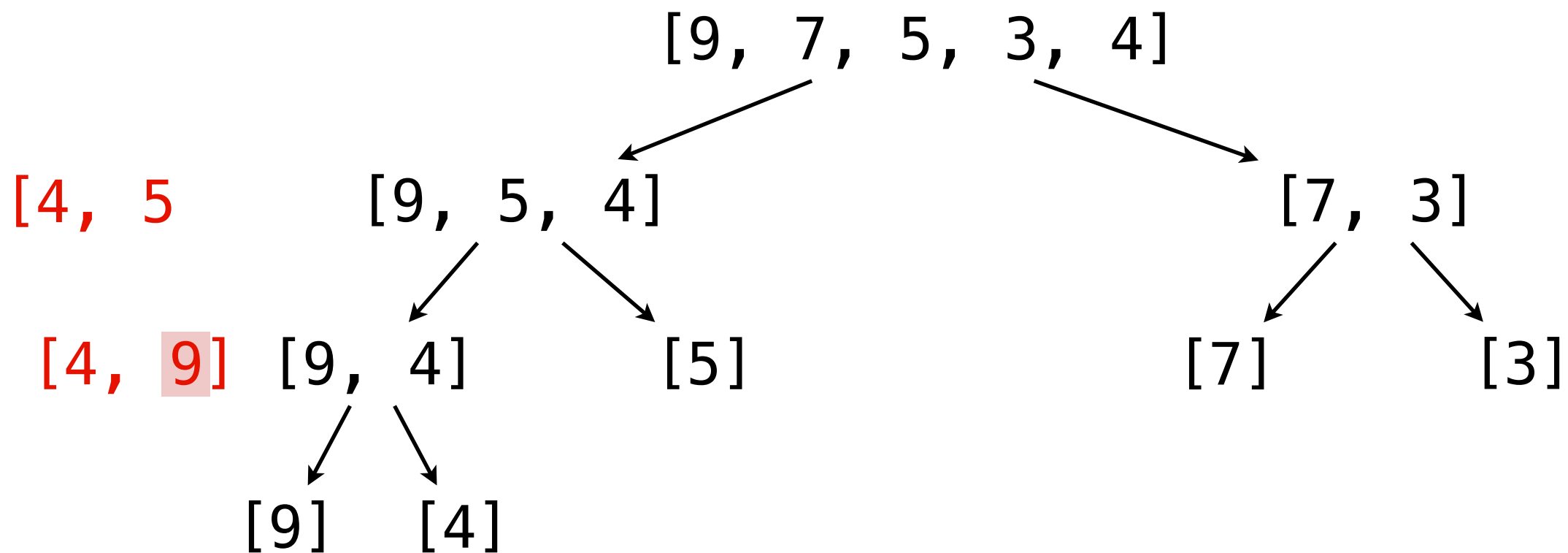
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



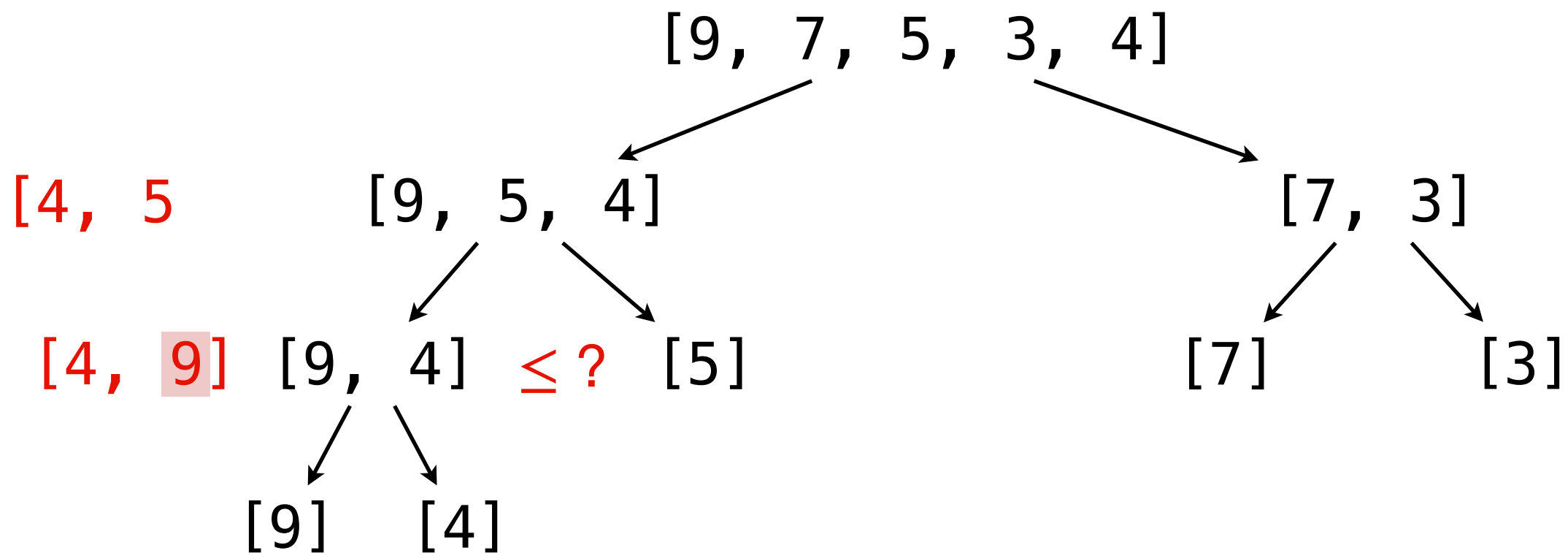
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



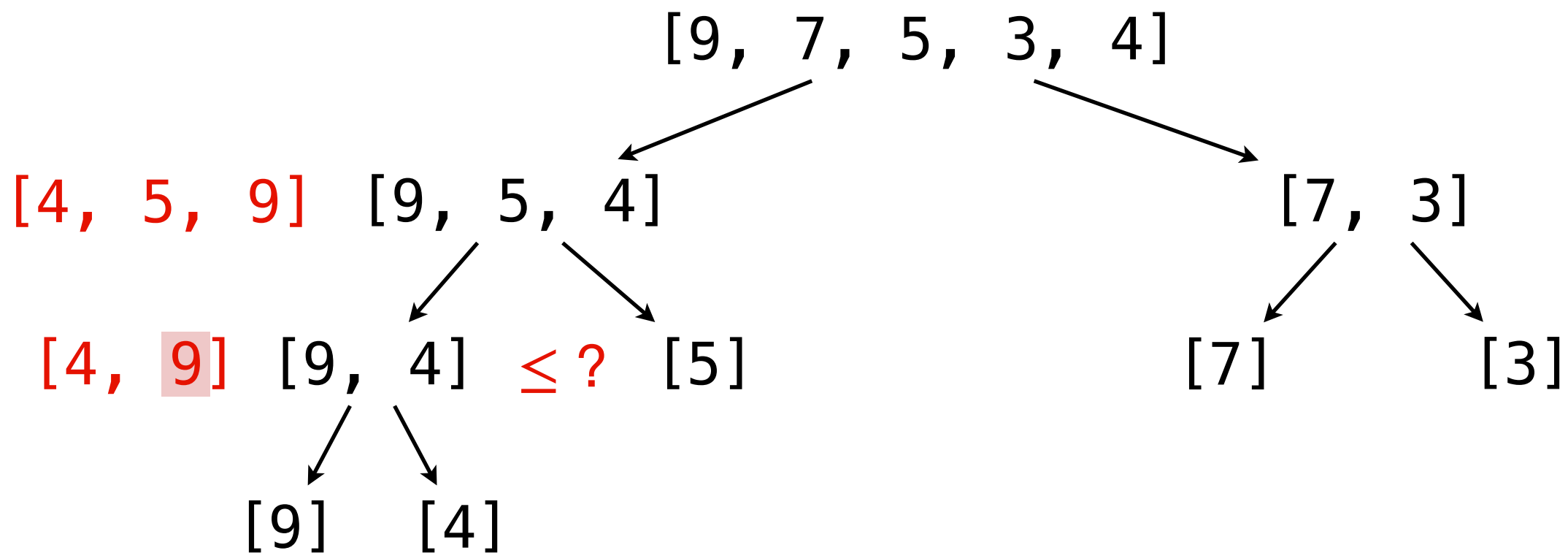
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



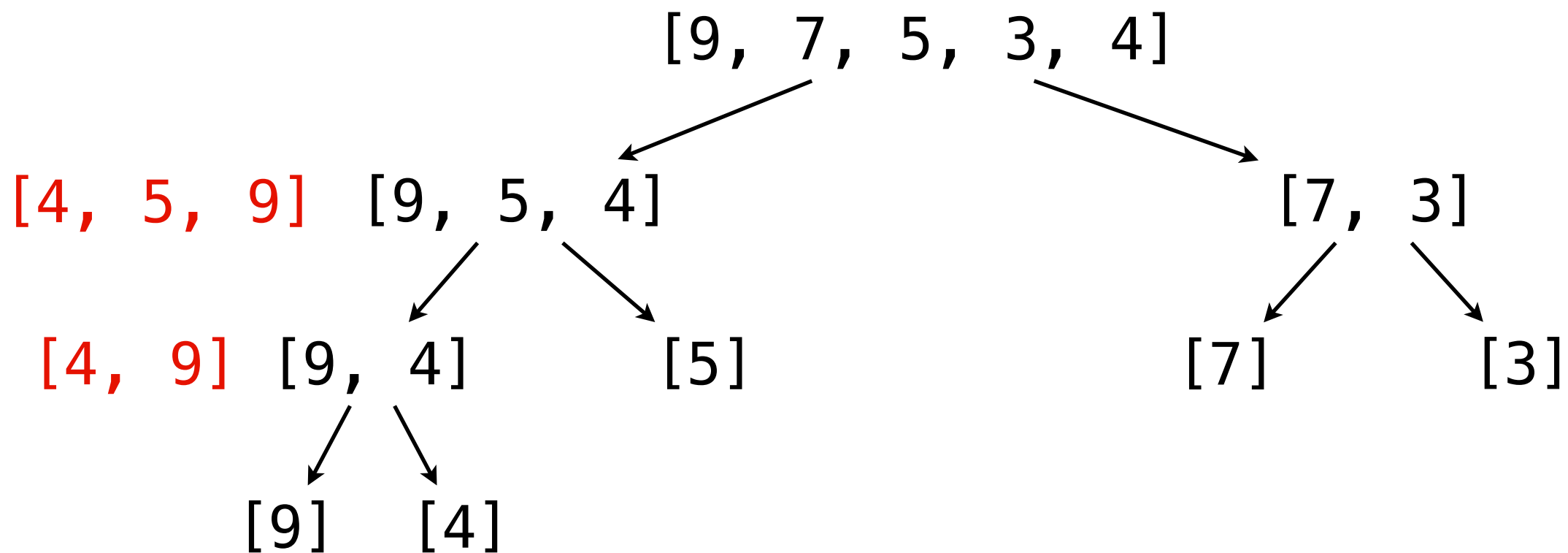
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



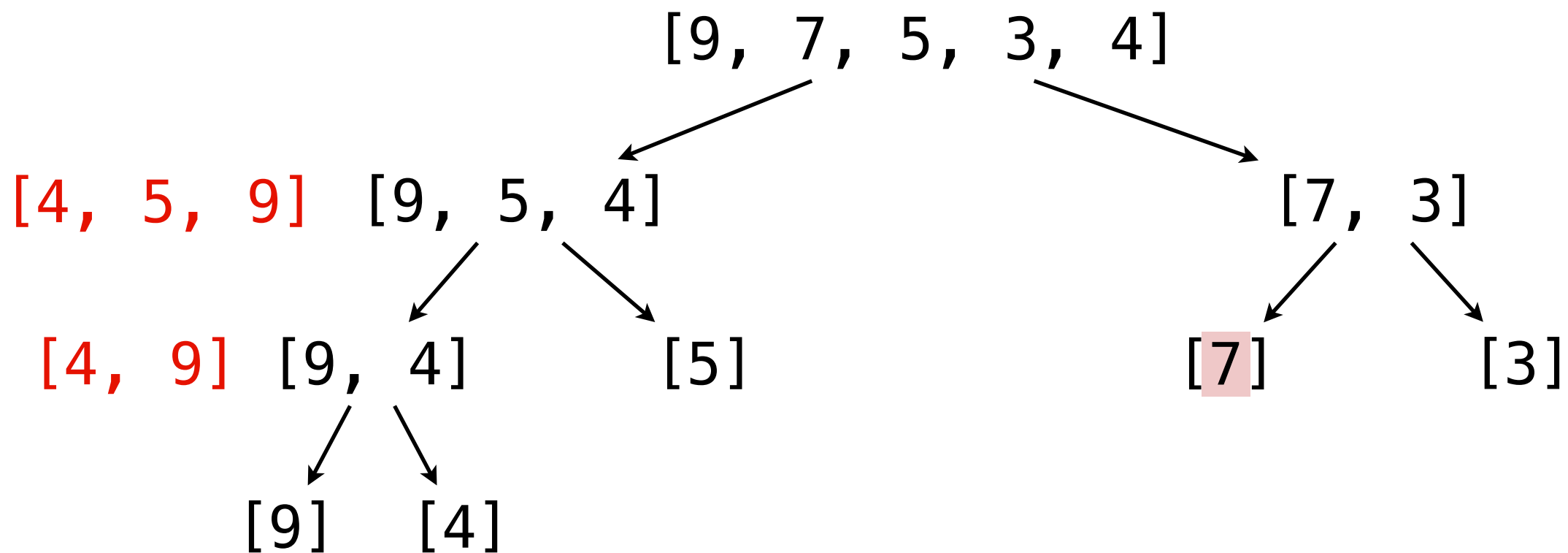
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



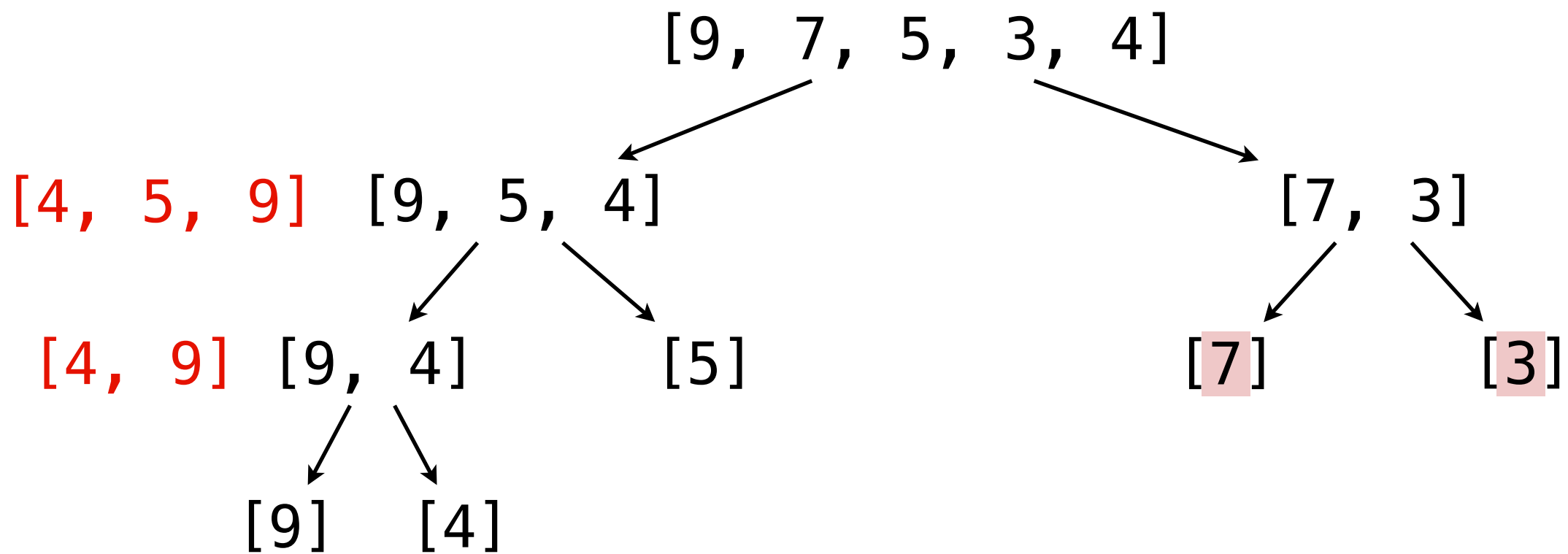
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



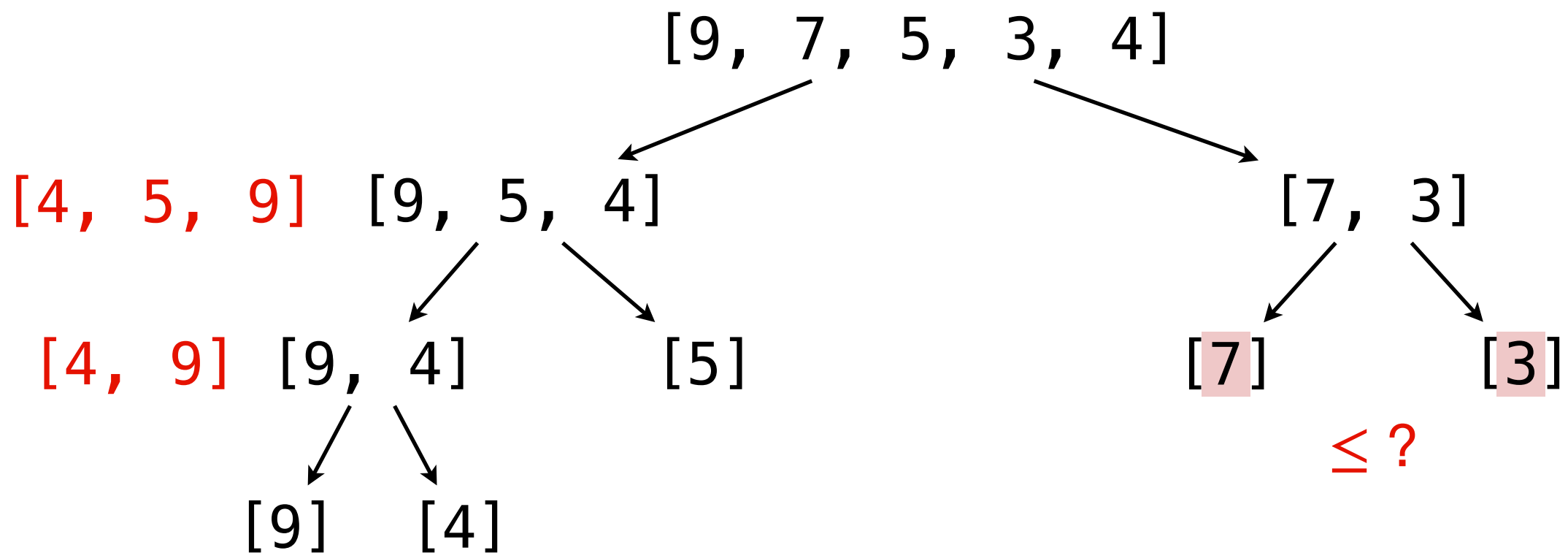
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



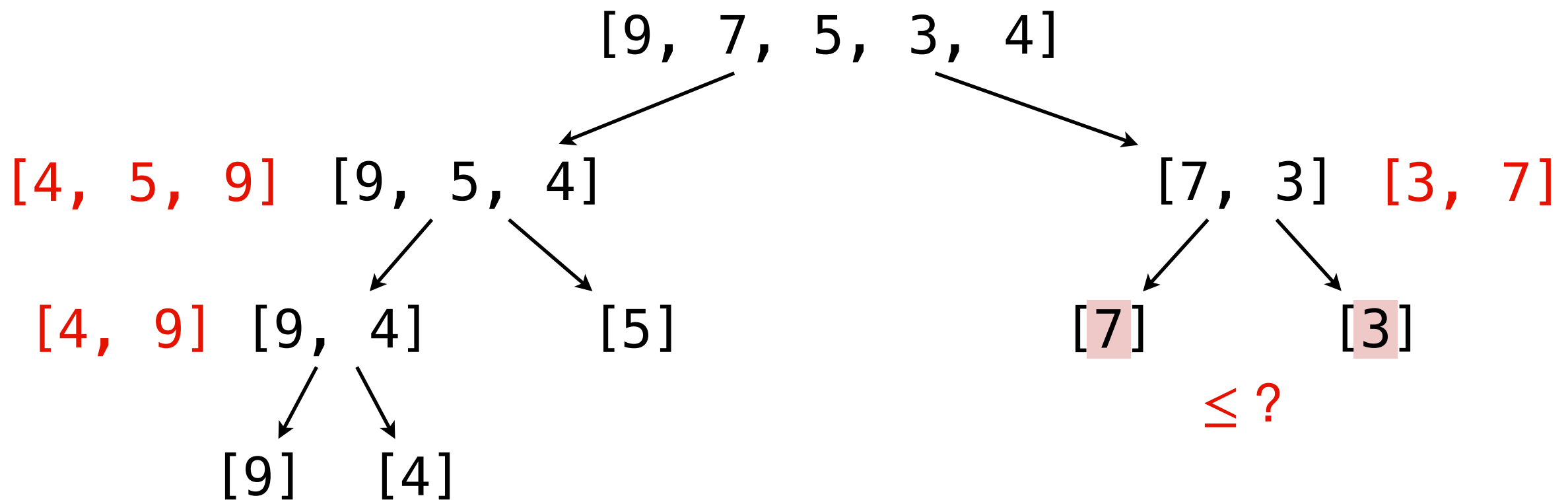
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



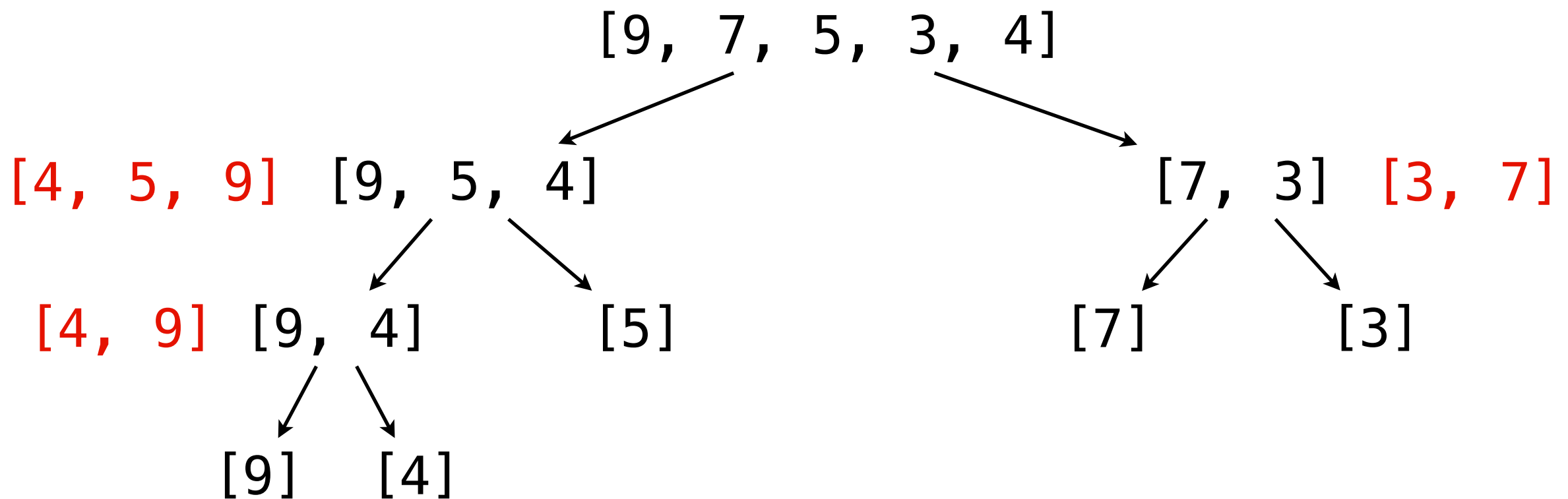
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



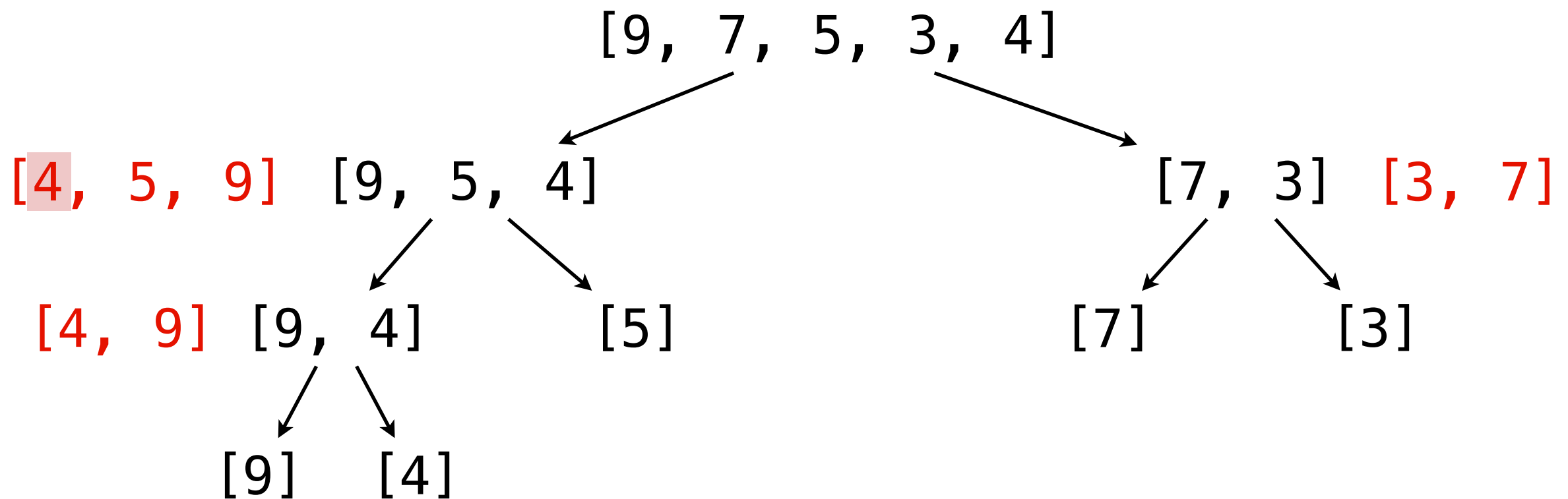
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



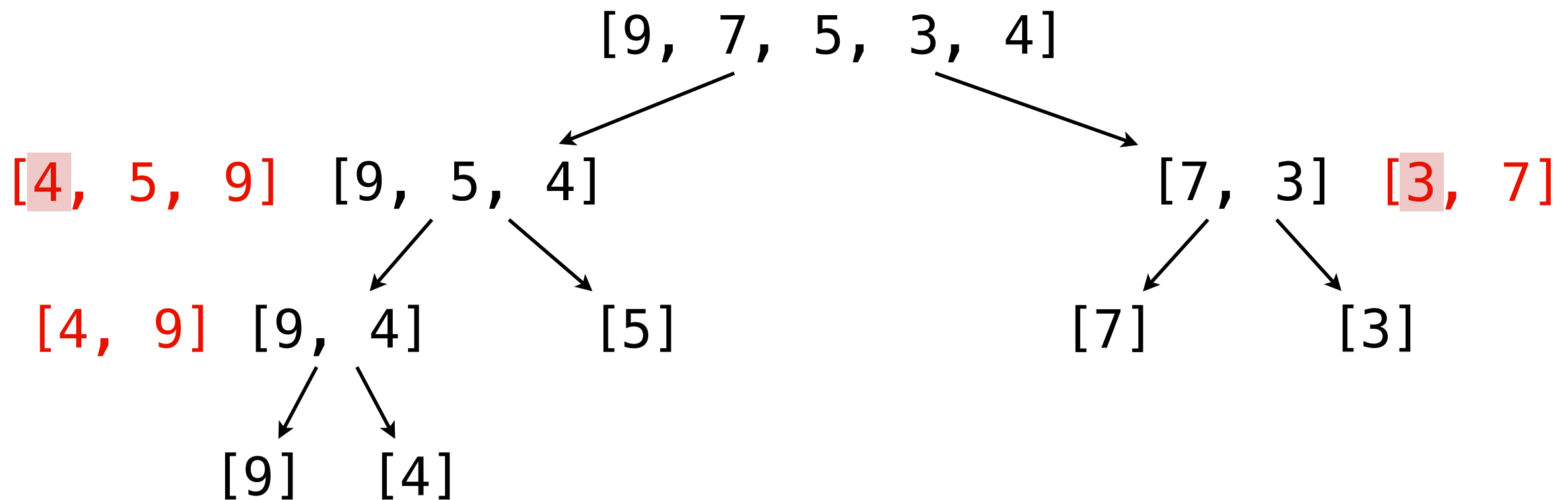
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



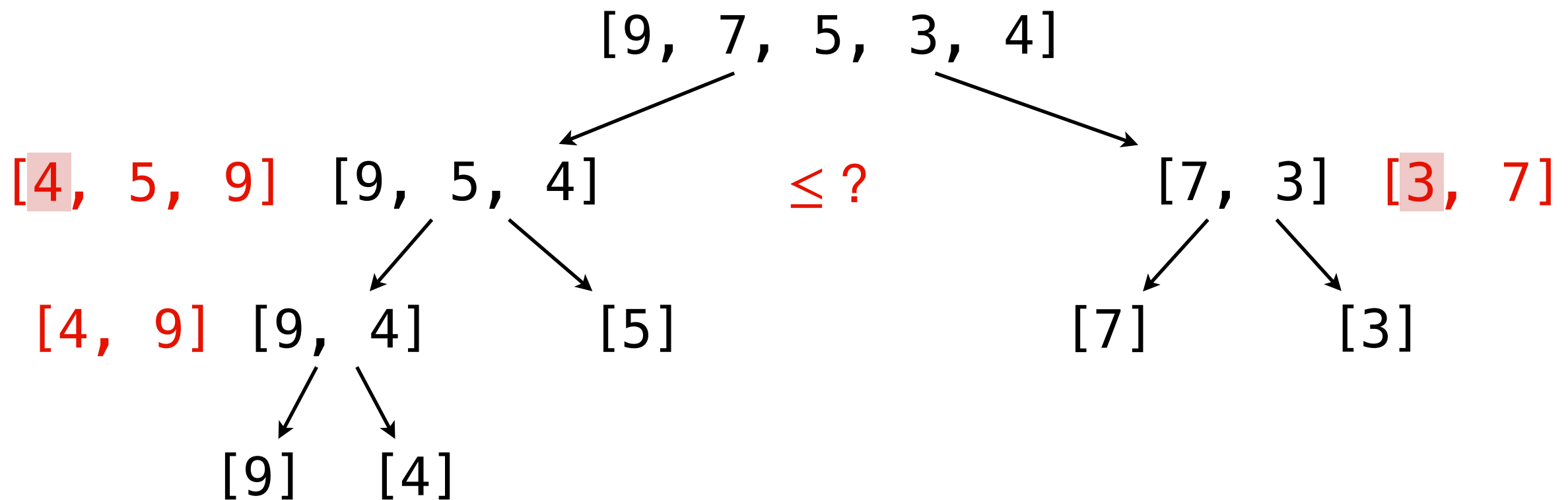
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



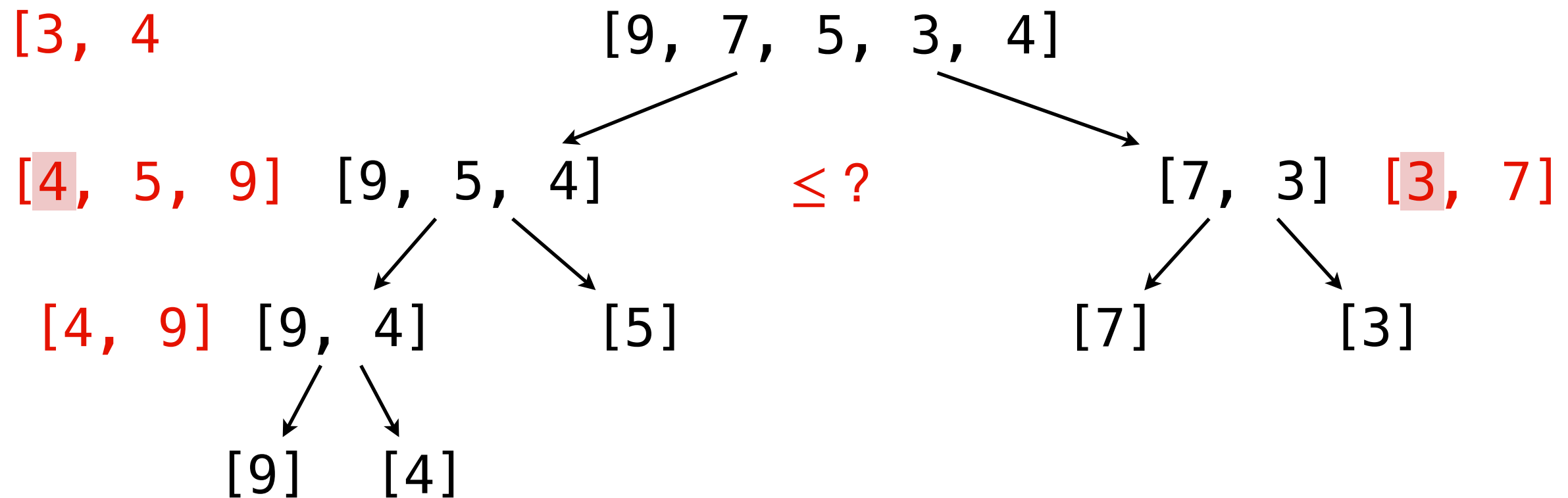
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



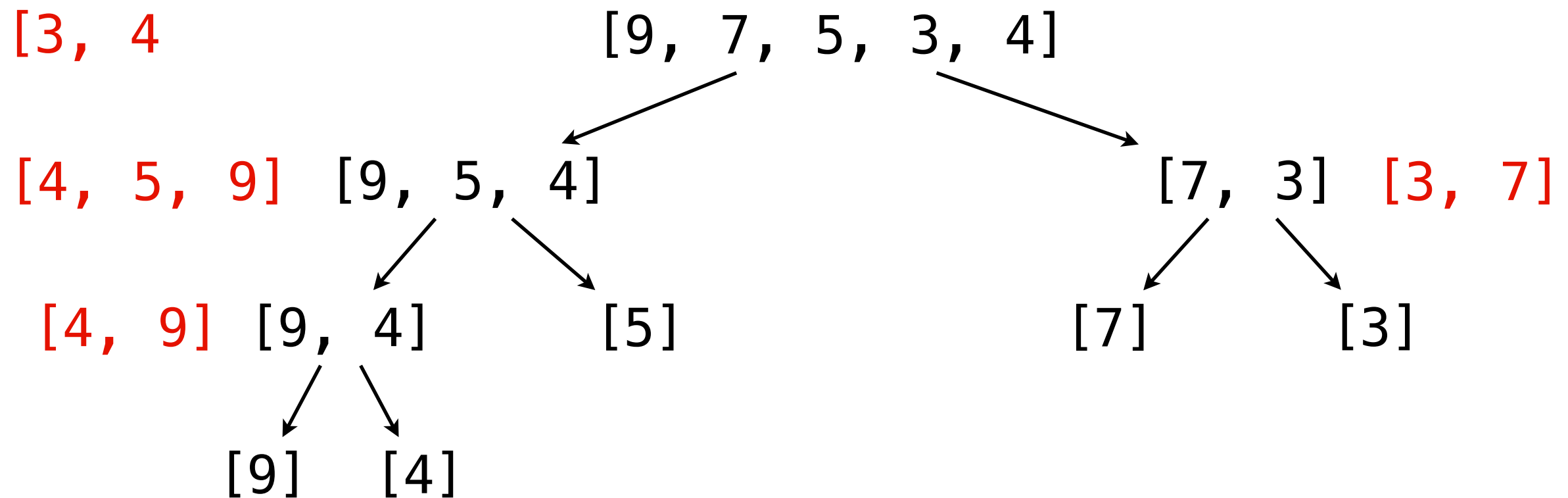
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



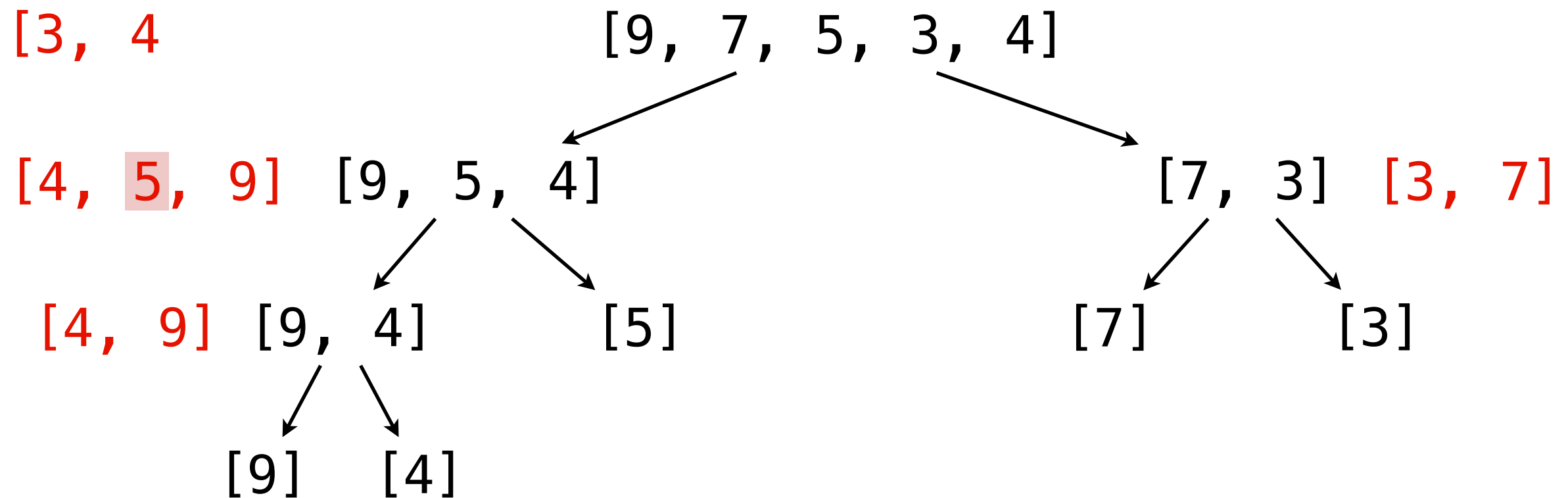
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



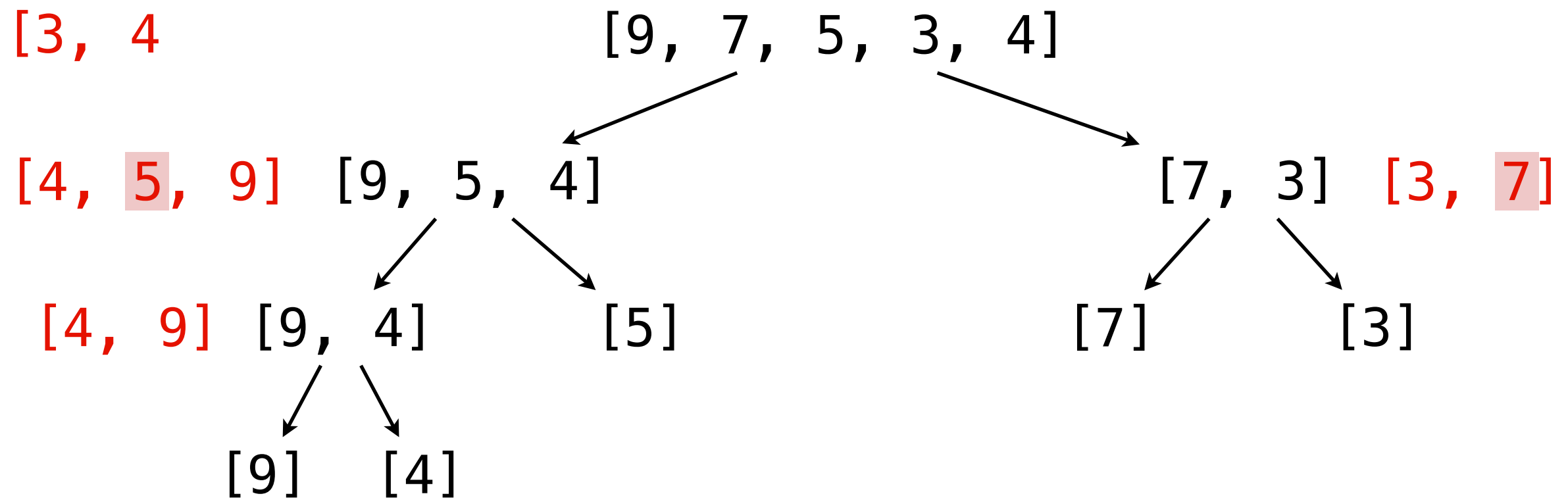
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



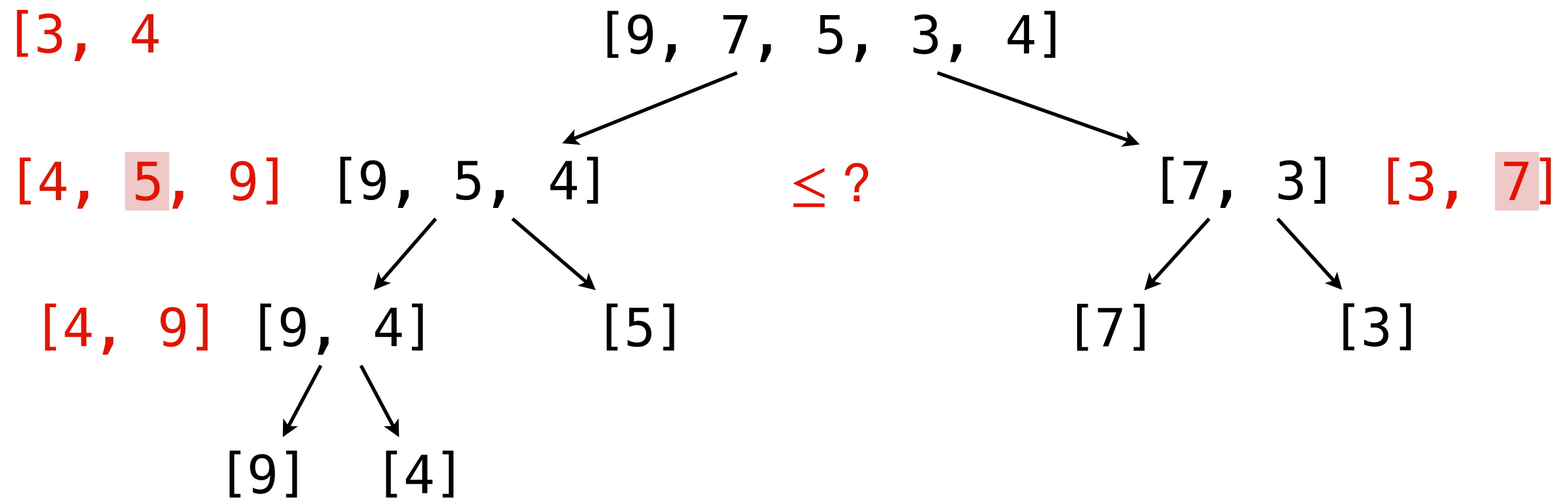
Mergesort: divide and conquer

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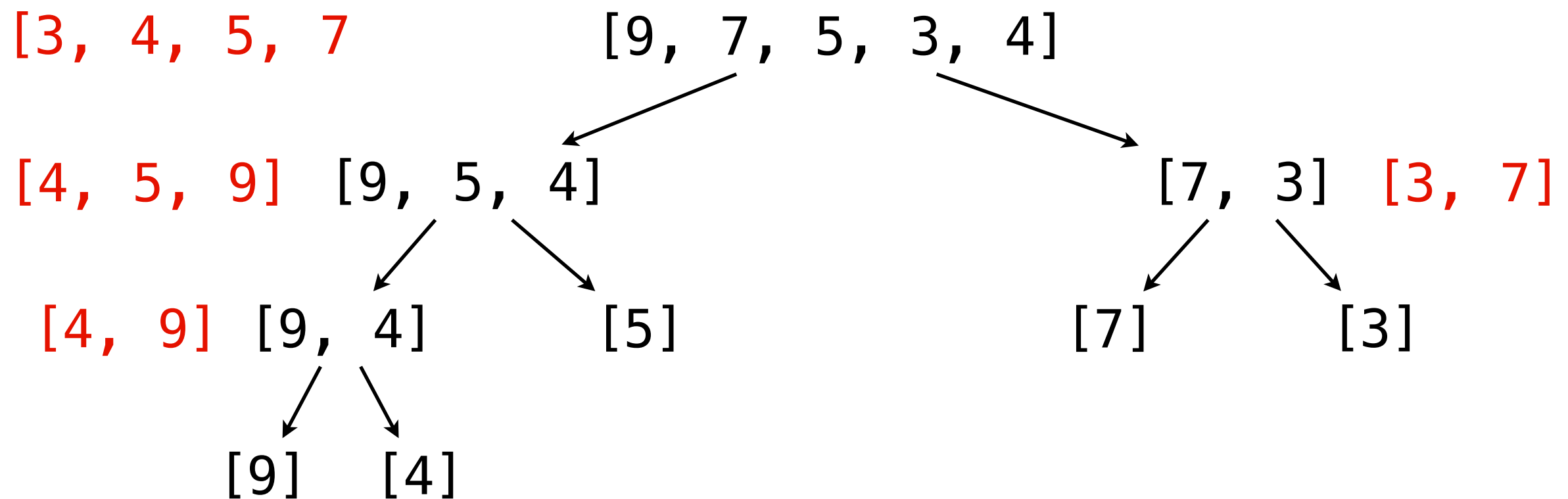
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



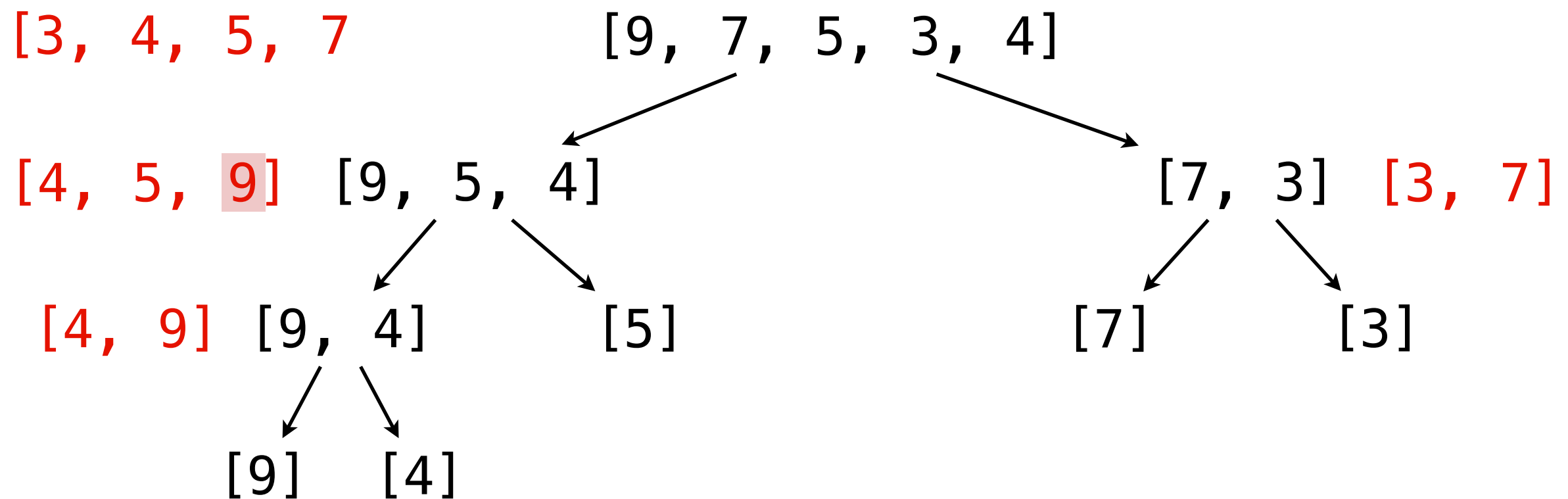
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



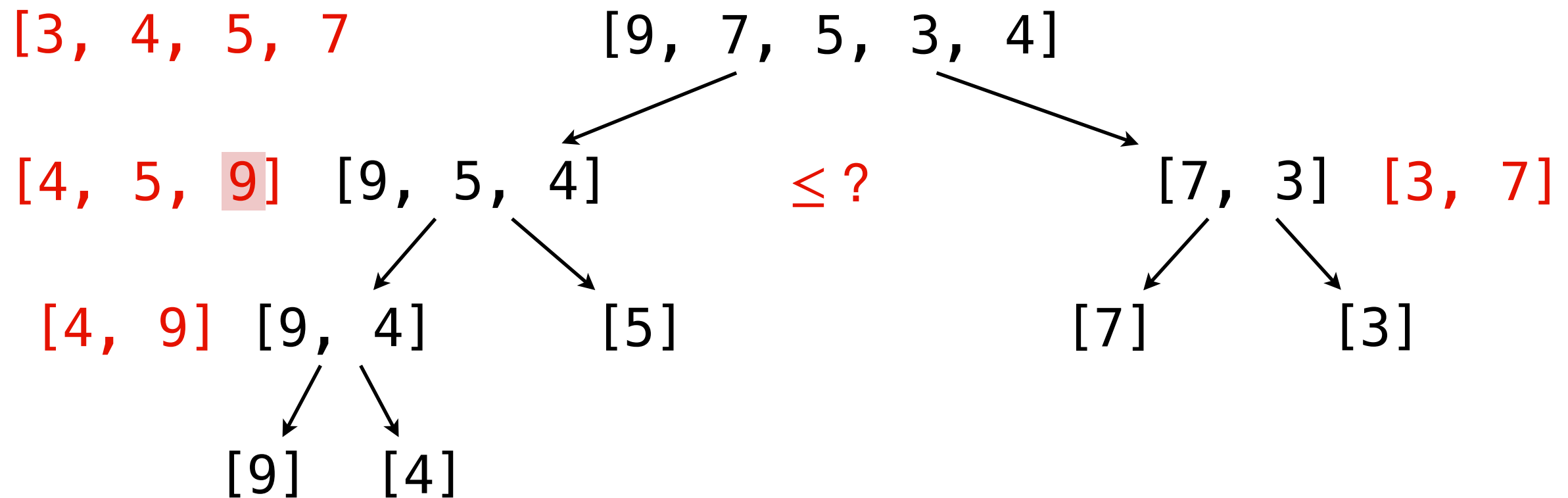
Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



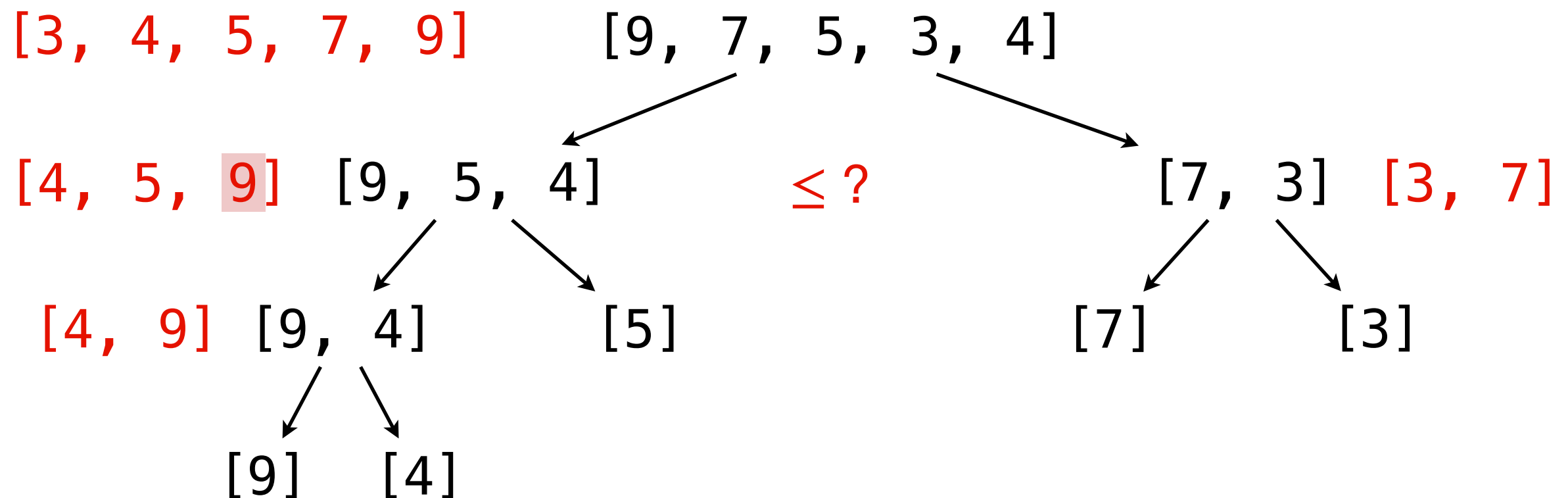
Mergesort: divide and conquer

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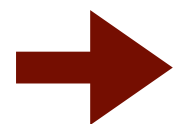
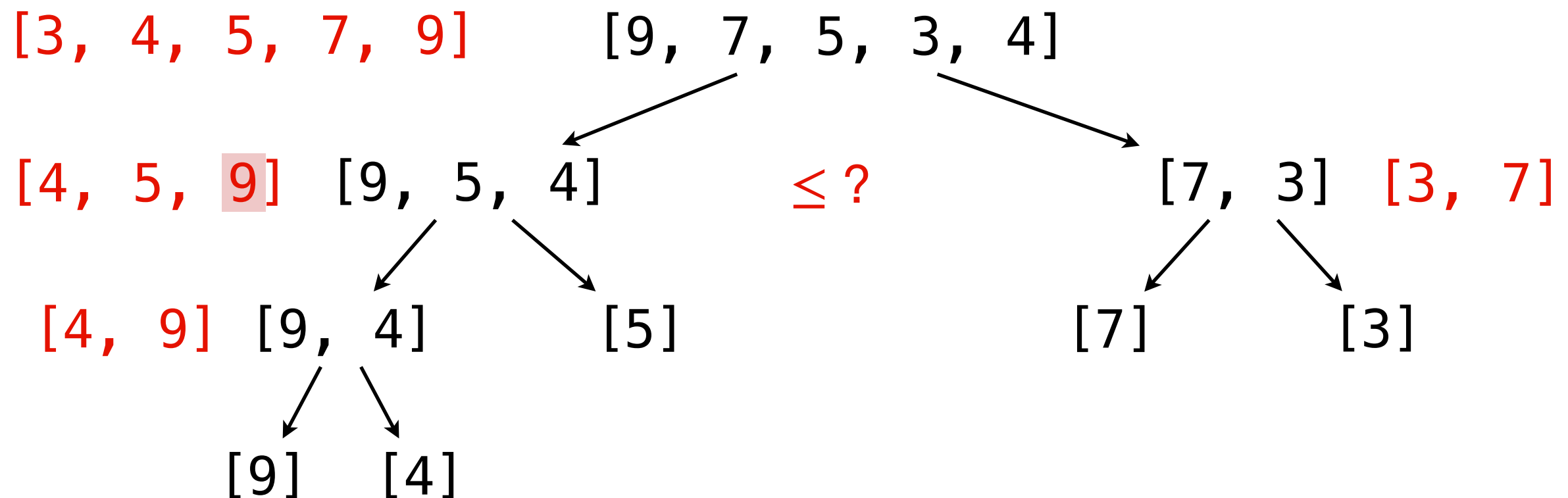
Mergesort: divide and conquer

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Mergesort: divide and conquer

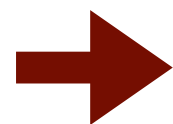
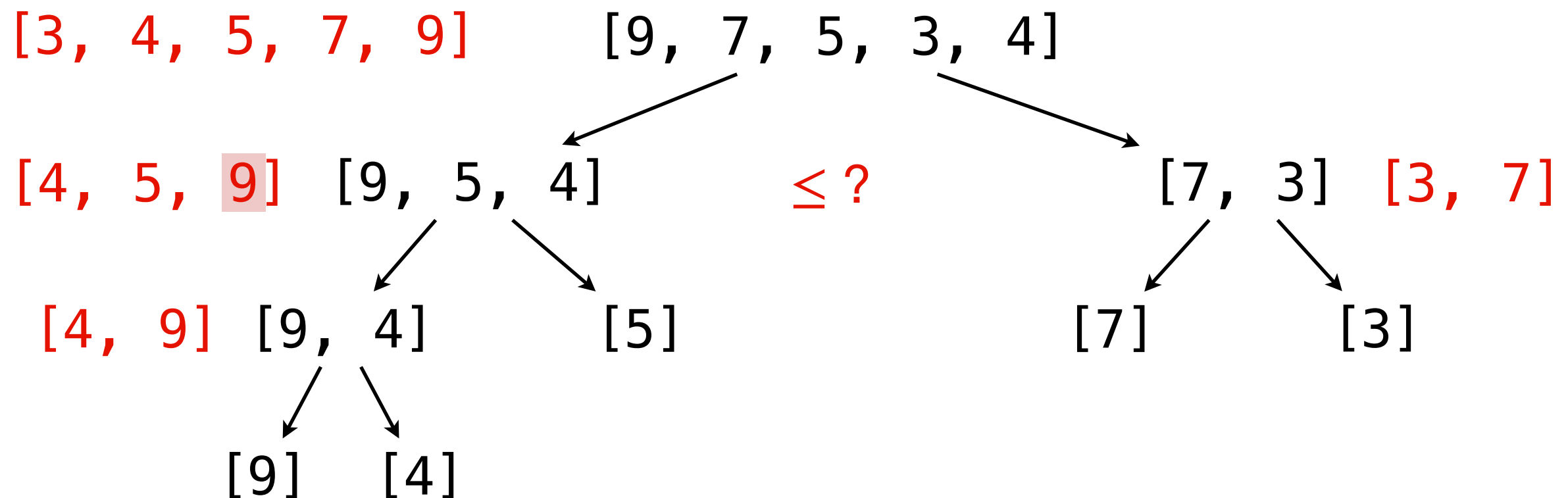
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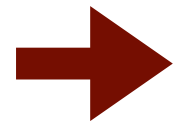
Note, we use a list here.

Mergesort: divide and conquer

Now, let's **merge**:



Note, we use a list here.



But there is almost a tree emerging...

Let's write the mergesort function!

Let's write the mergesort function!

```
(* msort :    int list -> int list
   REQUIRES: true
   ENSURES:  msort(L) evaluates to a sorted
              permutation of L.
*)
```

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fun msort ( [] : int list ) : int list =
```

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fun msort ([ ] : int list) : int list = [ ]
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fun msort ([] : int list) : int list = []
  | msort [x] = [x]
  | msort L =
      let
        val
      in
      end
```

Let's write the mergesort function!

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(* msort :    int list -> int list
   REQUIRES: true
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fun msort ([] : int list) : int list = []
  | msort [x] = [x]
  | msort L =
      let
        val (A, B) = split L
      in
      end
end
```

Let's write the mergesort function!

```
(* msort :    int list -> int list
   REQUIRES: true
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              permutation of L.
*)

fun msort ([] : int list) : int list = []
  | msort [x] = [x]
  | msort L =
      let
        val (A, B) = split L
      in
        merge(msort A, msort B)
      end
```

Now, let's write split!

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```
(* split :    int list -> int list * int list
   REQUIRES: true
   ENSURES:   split(L) evaluates to a pair of lists (A, B)
               such that length(A) and length(B) differ by
               at most 1, and A@B is a permutation of L.
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```
fun split ([] : int list) : int list * int list = ([], [])
  | split [x] = ([x], [])
  | split (x::y::L) =
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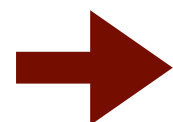
Have we
established post-
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Now, let's write split!

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  end
```

Have we
established post-
condition?



Prove in your head as you write code!

Work for split

Work for split

```
fun split ([] : int list) : int list * int list = ([], [])  
  | split [x] = ([x], [])  
  | split (x::y::L) =  
      let  
        val (A, B) = split L  
      in  
        (x::A, y::B)  
      end
```

Work for split

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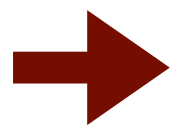
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      let  
        val (A, B) = split L  
      in  
        merge(msort A, msort B)  
      end
```

Work: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ with n the list length.

Equations:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(0) = C_0$$

$$W_{\text{msort}}(1) = C_1$$

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) =$$

Finally, work for mergesort!

```
fun msort ([ ] : int list) : int list = [ ]
  | msort [x] = [x]
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      let
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$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) = C_2 + W_{\text{split}}(n) +$$

$$n \geq 2$$

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Work: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ with n the list length.

Equations:

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$$= \lfloor n/2 \rfloor$$

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$$c n$$

Finally, work for mergesort!

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$$c n + c' n$$

Finally, work for mergesort!

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$$c n + c' n = (c + c') n$$

Finally, work for mergesort!

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Equations:

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$$c n + c' n = (c + c') n = c_3 n$$

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$$c n + c' n = (c + c') n = c_3 n$$

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq C_2 + C_3 n + 2 W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

Finally, work for mergesort!

Work: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ with n the list length.

Equations:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(0) = C_0$$

$$W_{\text{msort}}(1) = C_1$$

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$$c n + c' n = (c + c') n = c_3 n$$

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq C_2 + C_3 n + 2 W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq C_4 n + 2 W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

Finally, work for mergesort!

Work: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ with n the list length.

Equations:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(0) = C_0$$

$$= \lfloor n/2 \rfloor$$

$$= \lceil n/2 \rceil$$

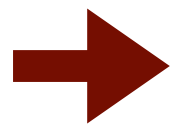
$$W_{\text{msort}}(1) = C_1$$

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Let's look at the tree method to find a closed form.

Finally, work for mergesort!

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + 2 W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

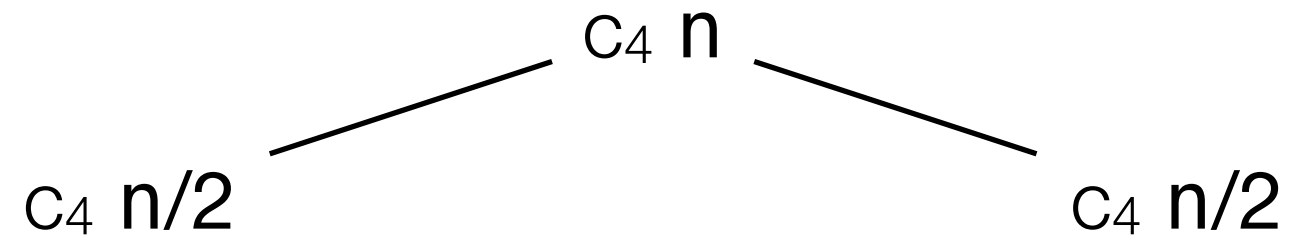
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$$c_4 n$$

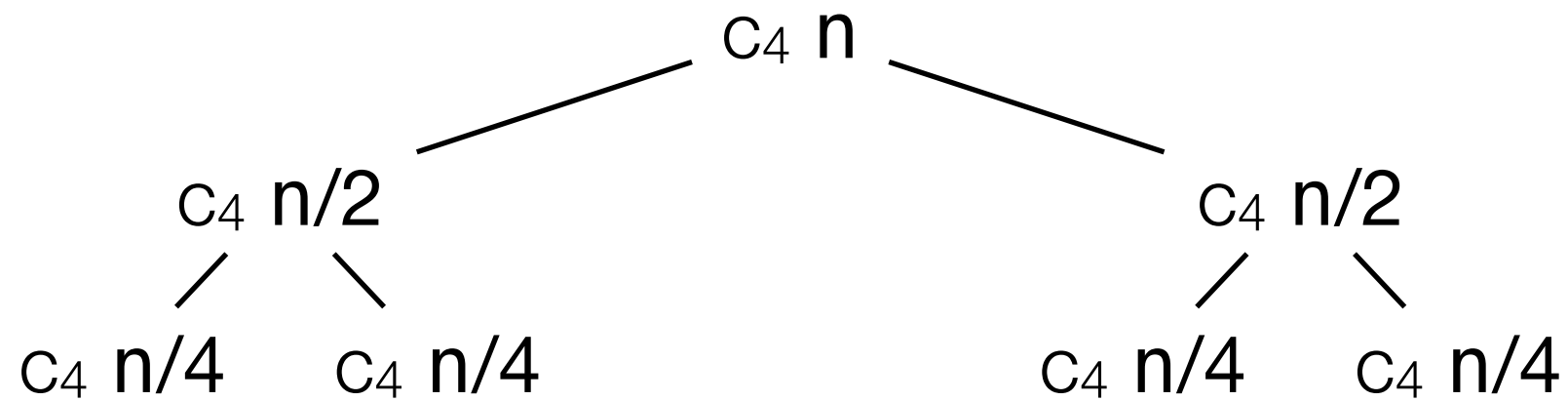
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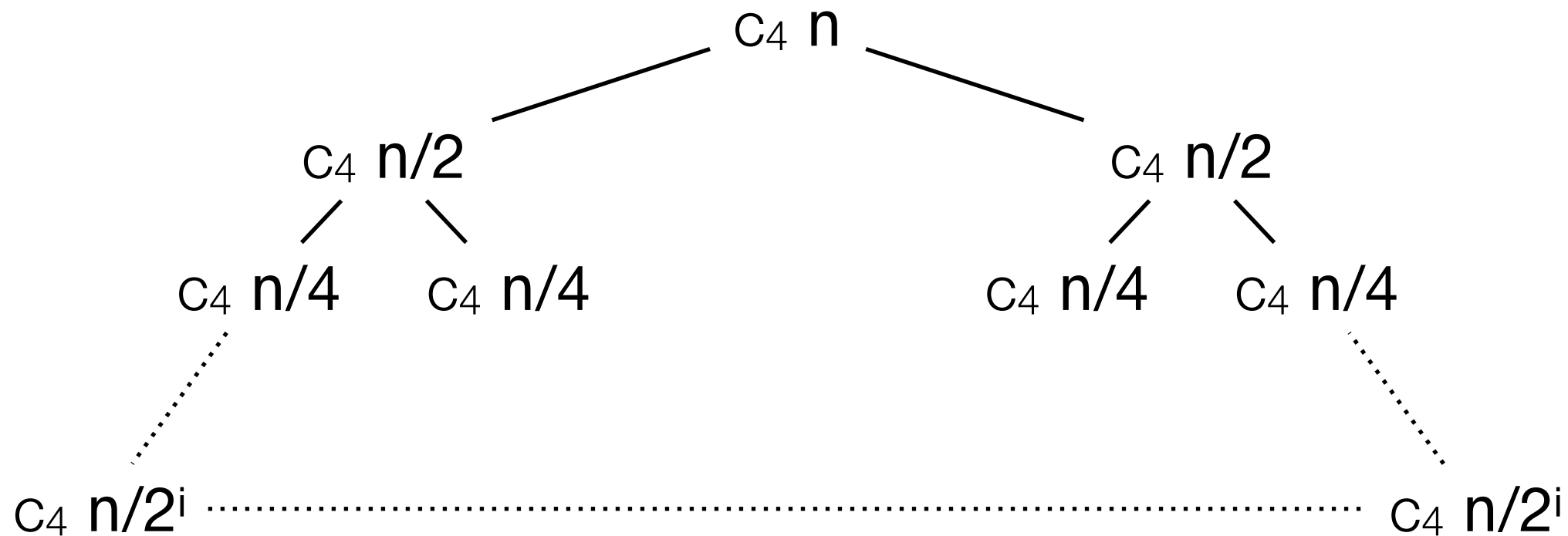
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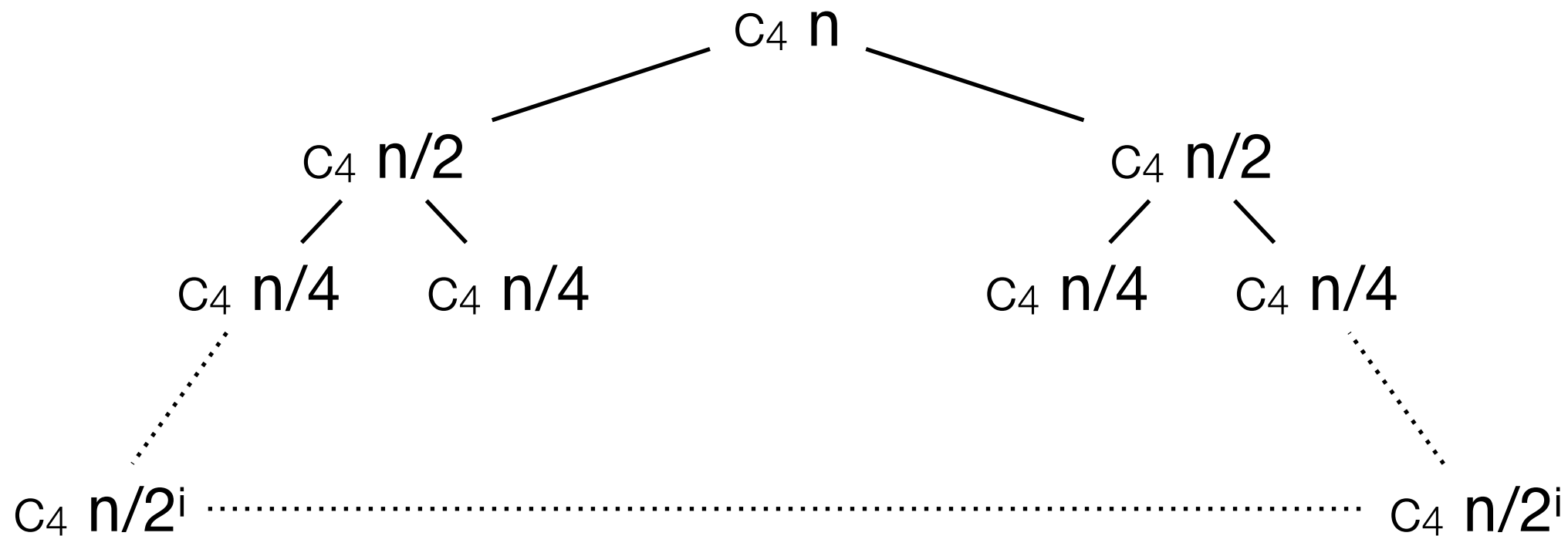
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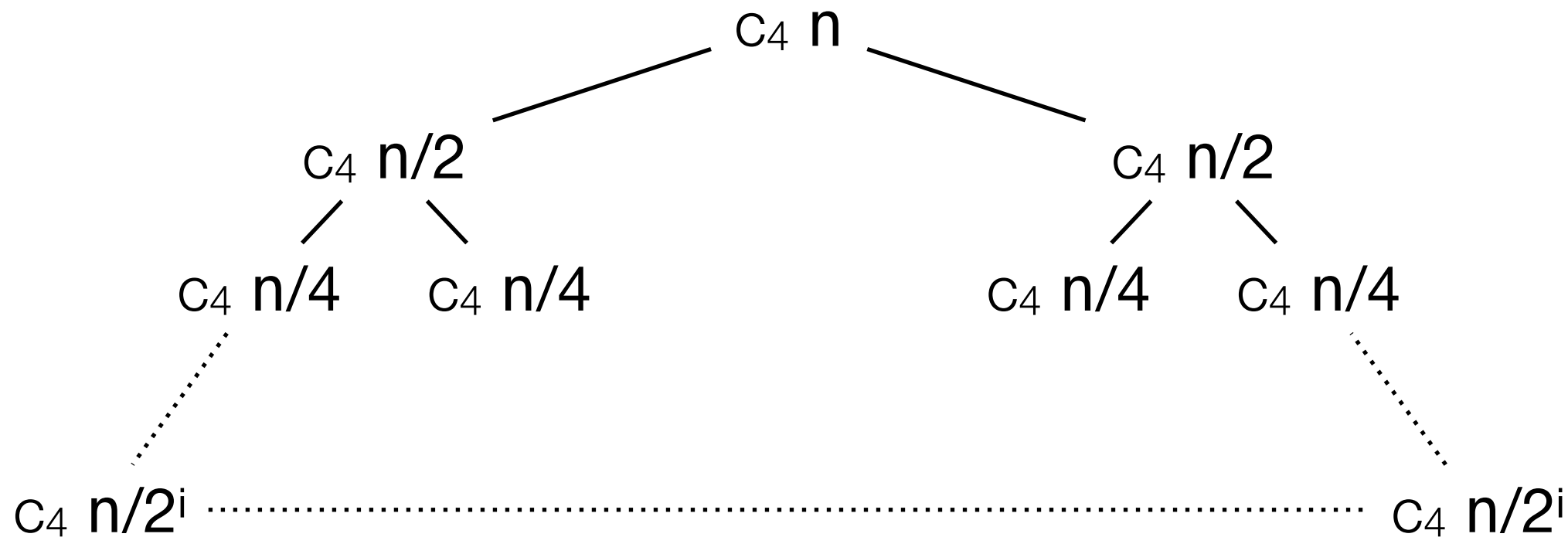
work per level:



Finally, work for mergesort!

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + 2 W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

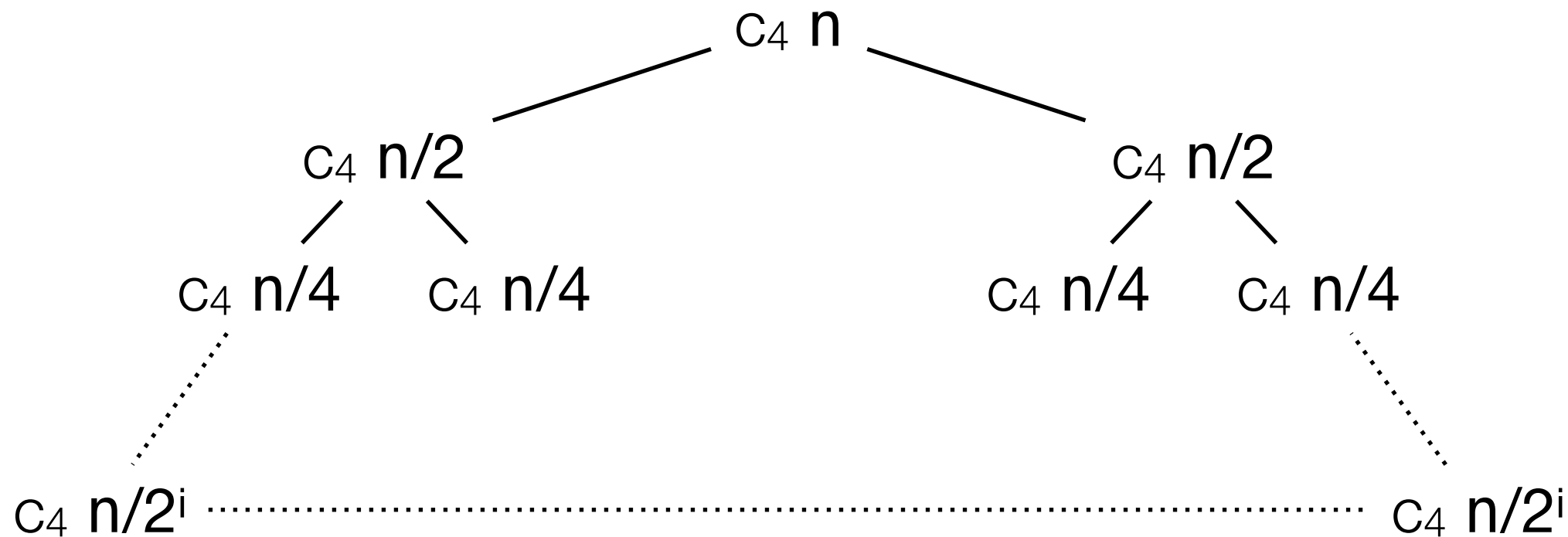
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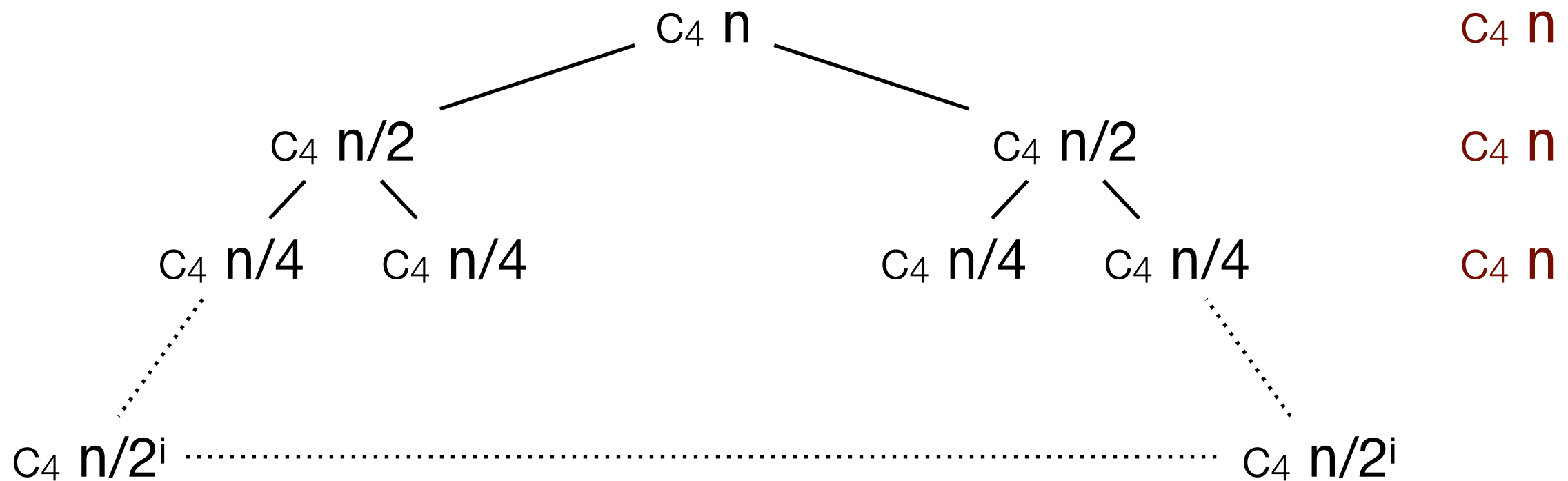
$c_4 n$

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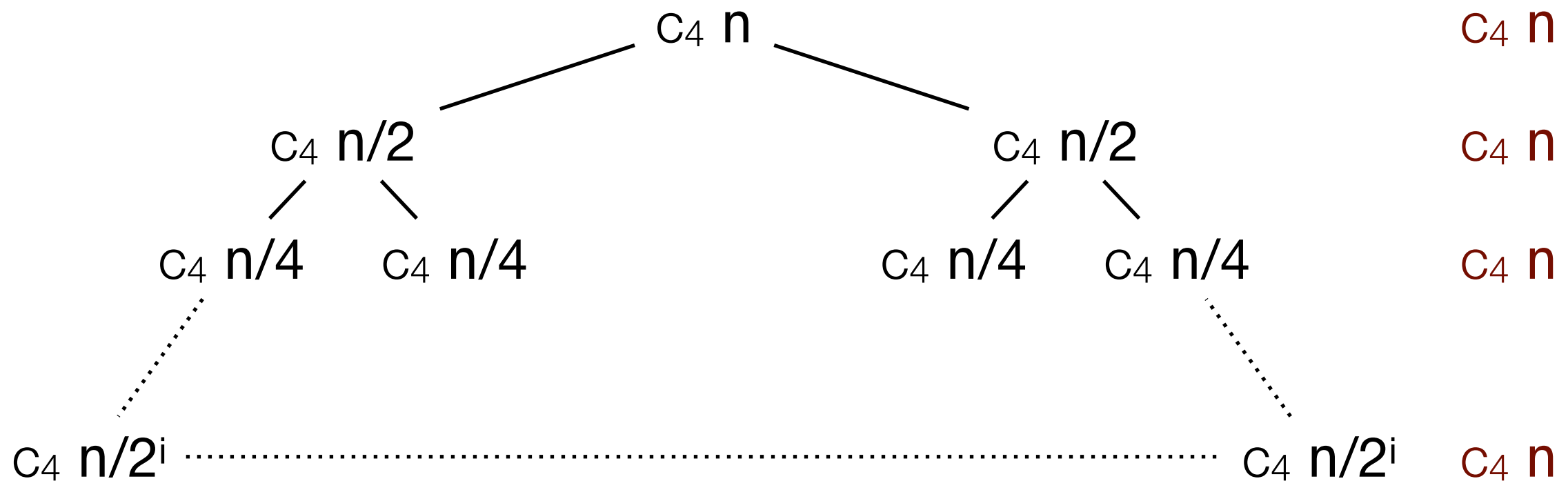
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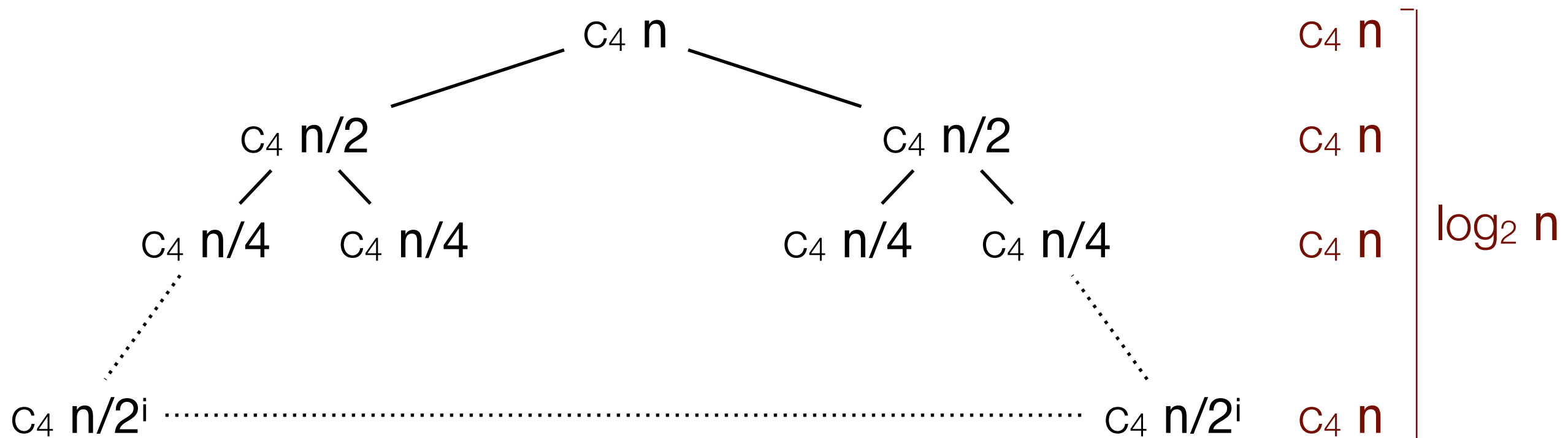
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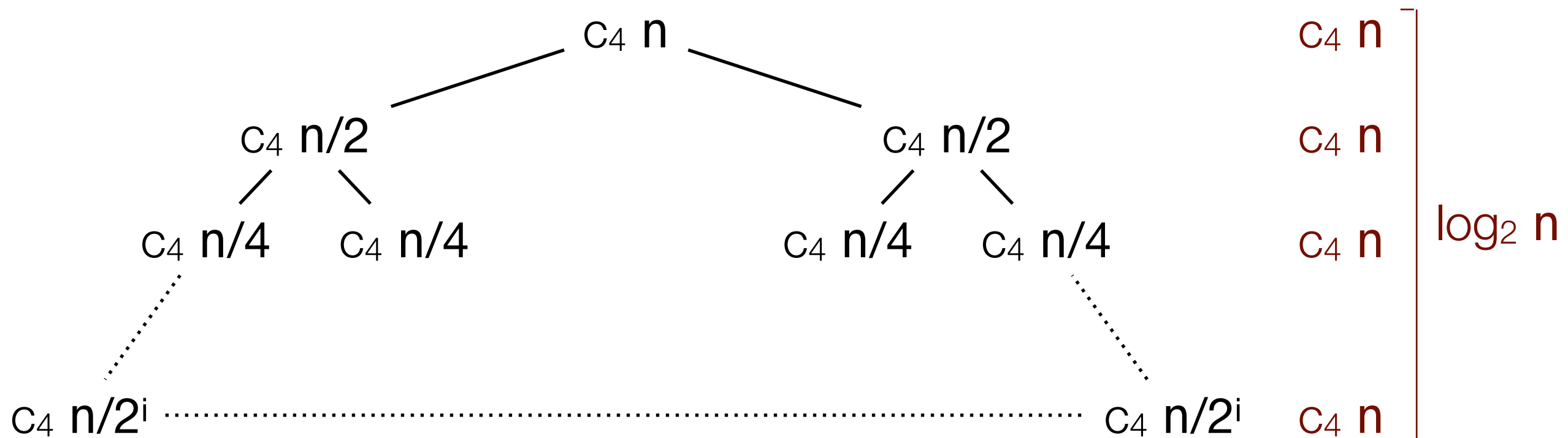
work per level:



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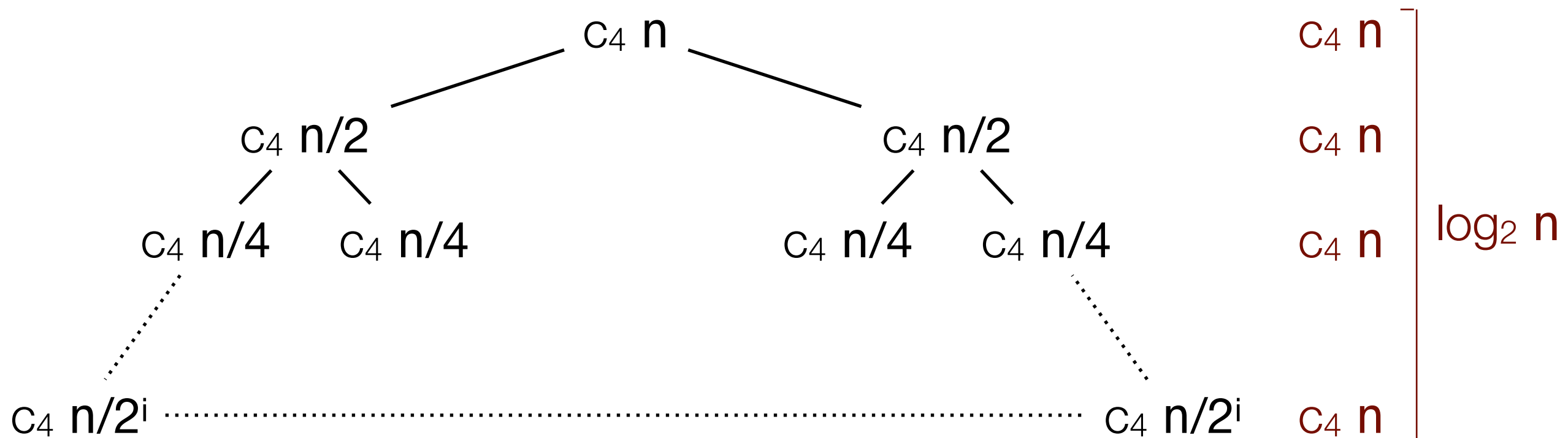


Consequently:

Finally, work for mergesort!

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + 2 W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work per level:

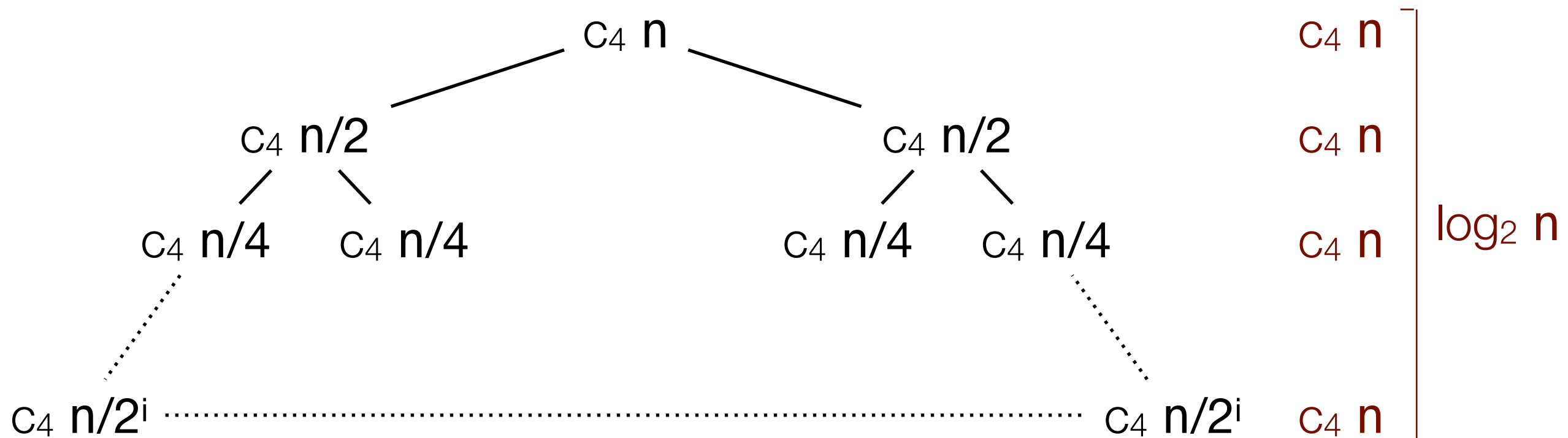


Consequently: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n \log n)$.

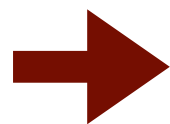
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Is there an opportunity for parallelism?

Span for mergesort for lists

Recall work: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ with n the list length.

Equations:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(0) = C_0$$

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$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) = C_2 + W_{\text{split}}(n) + W_{\text{msort}}(n_a) + W_{\text{msort}}(n_b) \\ + W_{\text{merge}}(n_a, n_b), \text{ for } n = n_a + n_b \text{ and } n \geq 2$$

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq C_2 + C_3 n + 2 W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

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parallelize recursive
calls on sub-lists

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq C_2 + C_3 n + 2 W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

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max!

parallelize recursive calls on sub-lists

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Span for mergesort for lists

Span: $S_{\text{msort}}(n)$ with n the list length.

Equations:

$$S_{\text{msort}}(0) = C_0$$

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$$S_{\text{msort}}(n) = C_2 + S_{\text{split}}(n) + \max(S_{\text{msort}}(n_a), S_{\text{msort}}(n_b)) + S_{\text{merge}}(n_a, n_b), \text{ for } n = n_a + n_b \text{ and } n \geq 2$$

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parallelize recursive calls on sub-lists

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$$S_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq C_4 n + S_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

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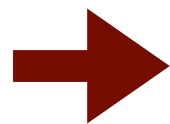
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parallelize recursive calls on sub-lists

$$S_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq C_2 + C_3 n + S_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

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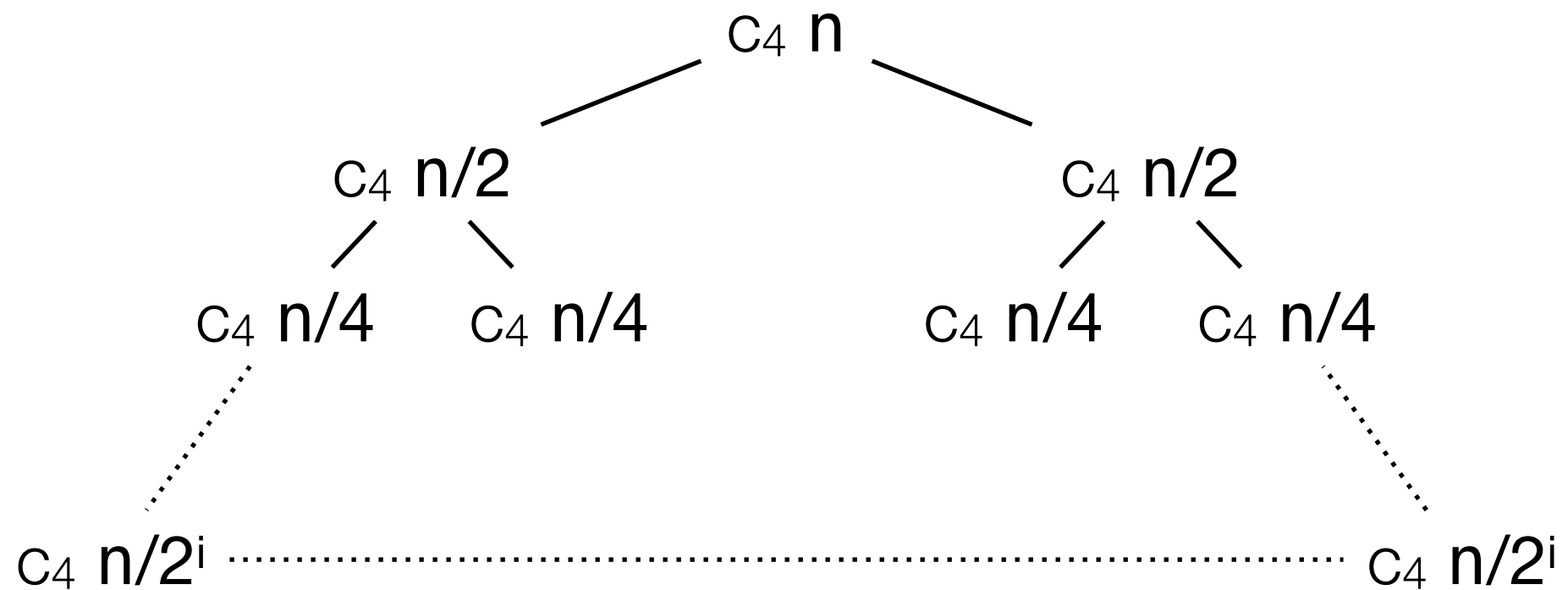
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Span for mergesort for lists

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Span for mergesort for lists

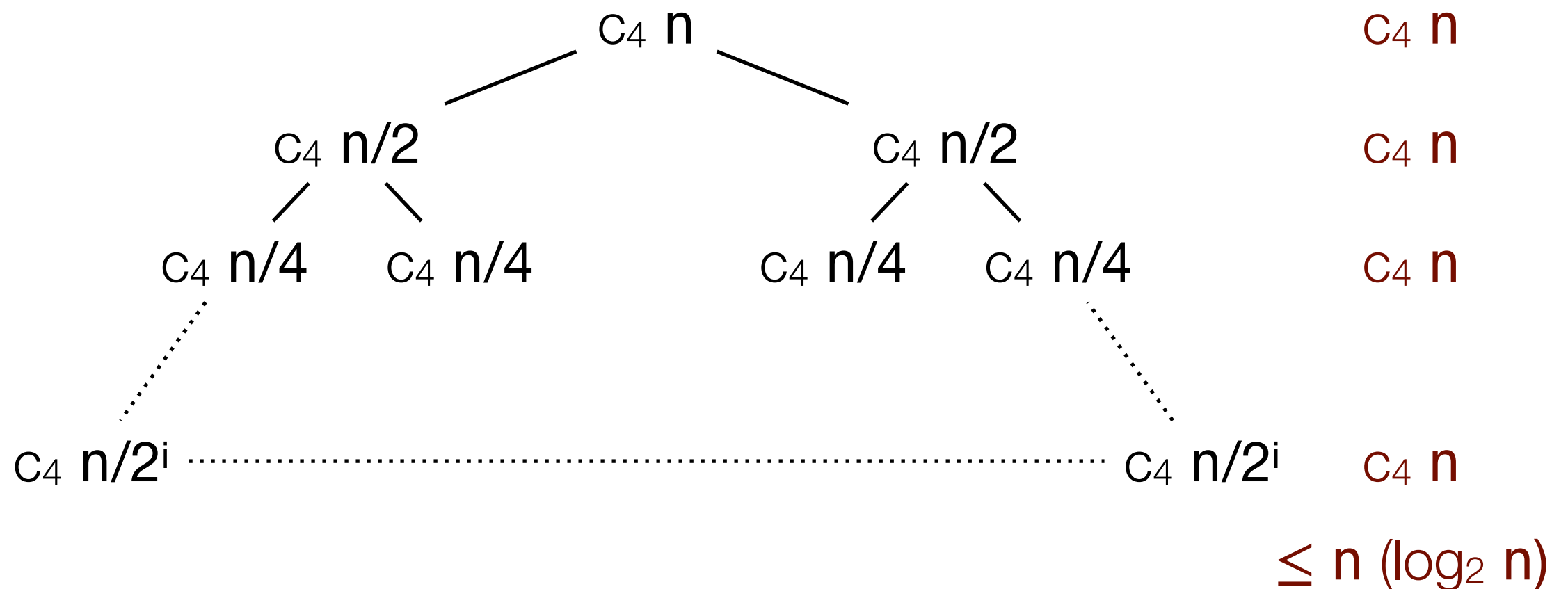
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Span for mergesort for lists

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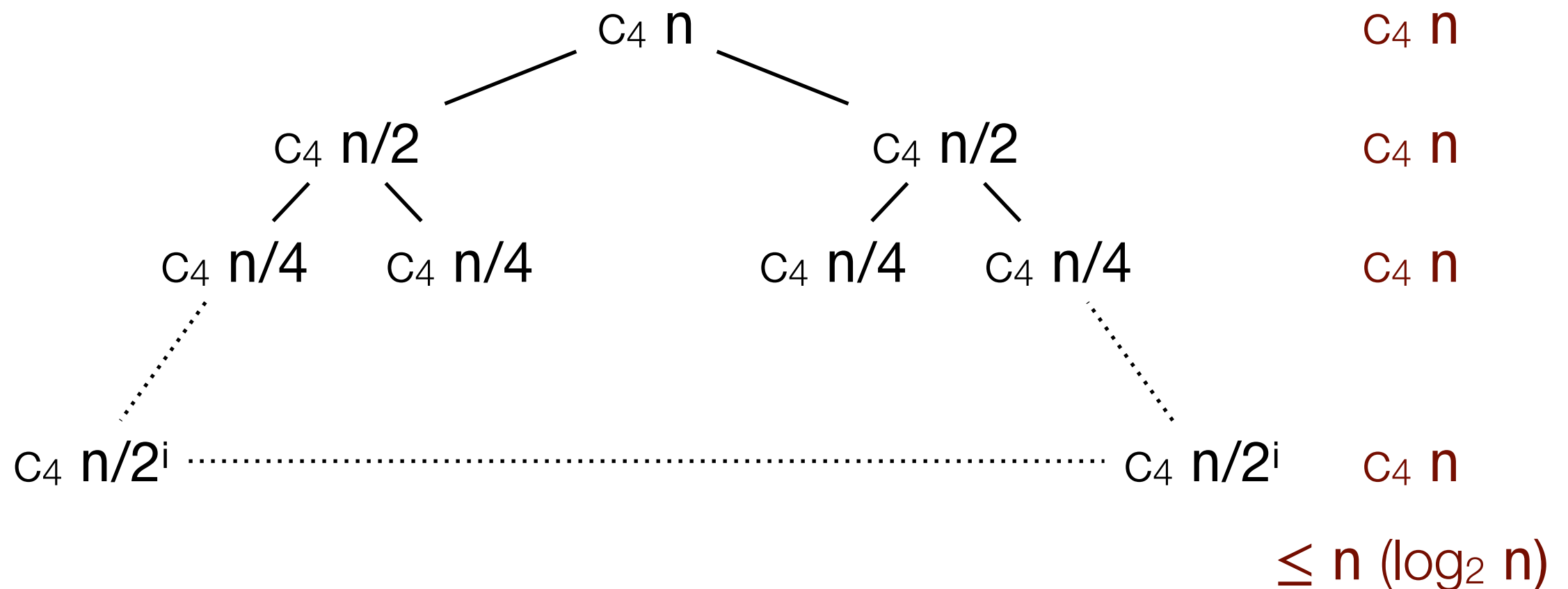
work:



Span for mergesort for lists

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work:



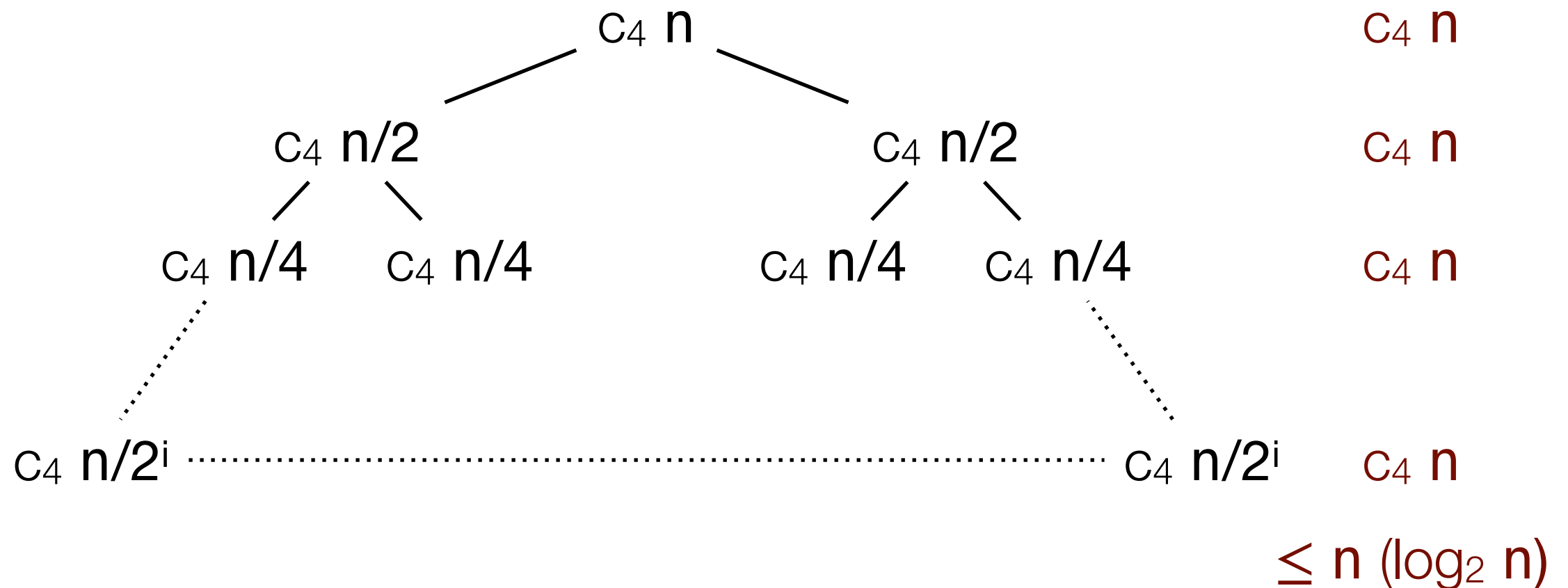
Consequently: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n \log n)$

Span for mergesort for lists

span:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work:



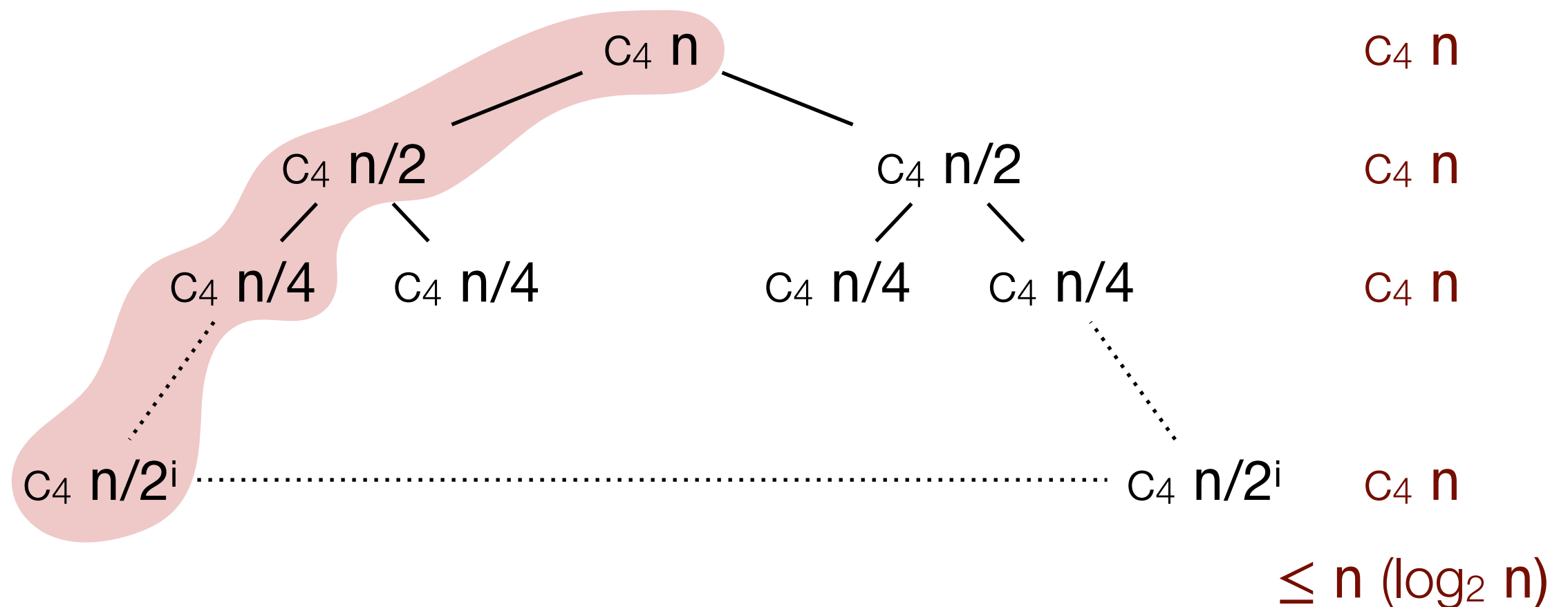
Consequently: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n \log n)$

Span for mergesort for lists

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$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work:



Consequently: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n \log n)$

Span for mergesort for lists

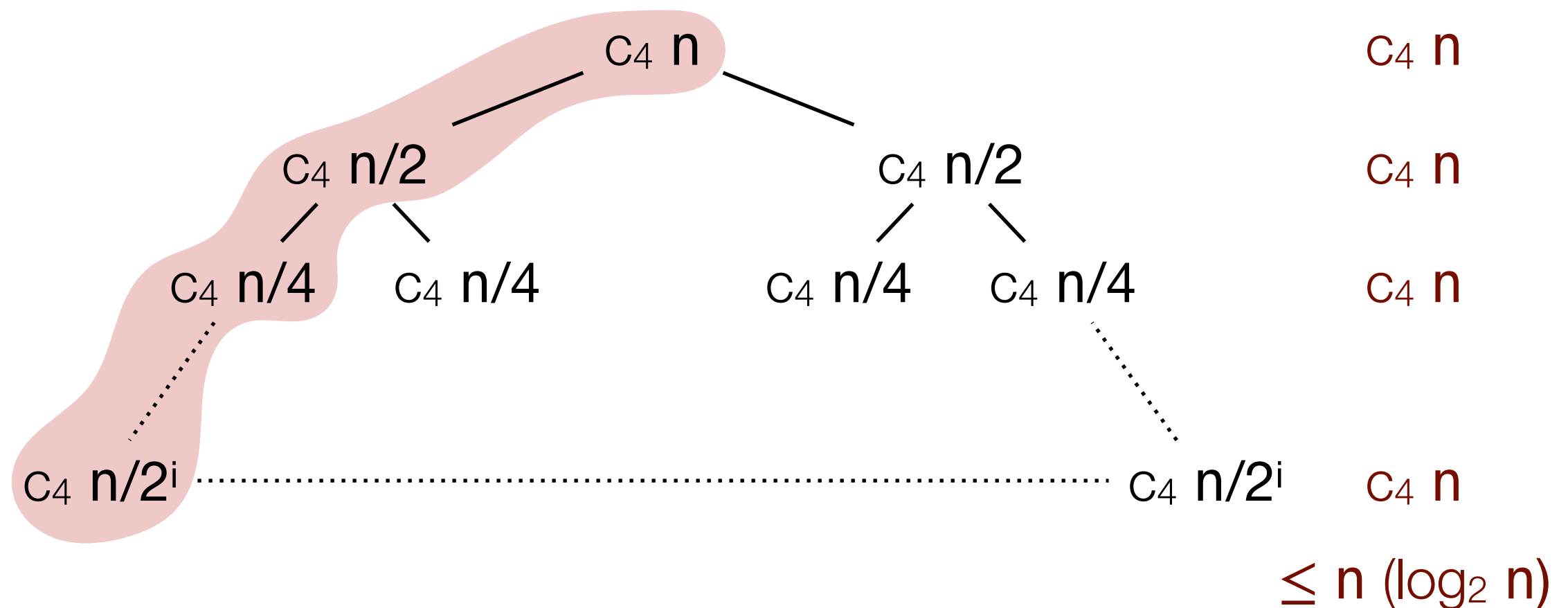
span:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work:

$c_4 n$

$c_4 n$



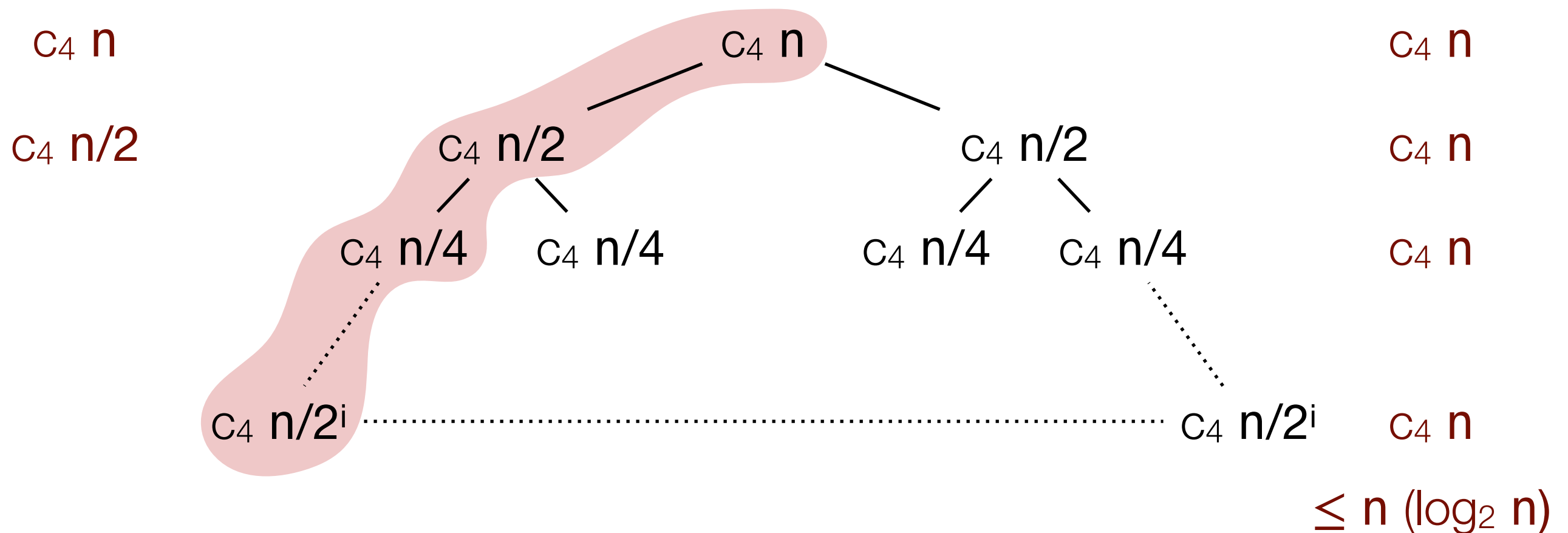
Consequently: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n \log n)$

Span for mergesort for lists

span:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work:



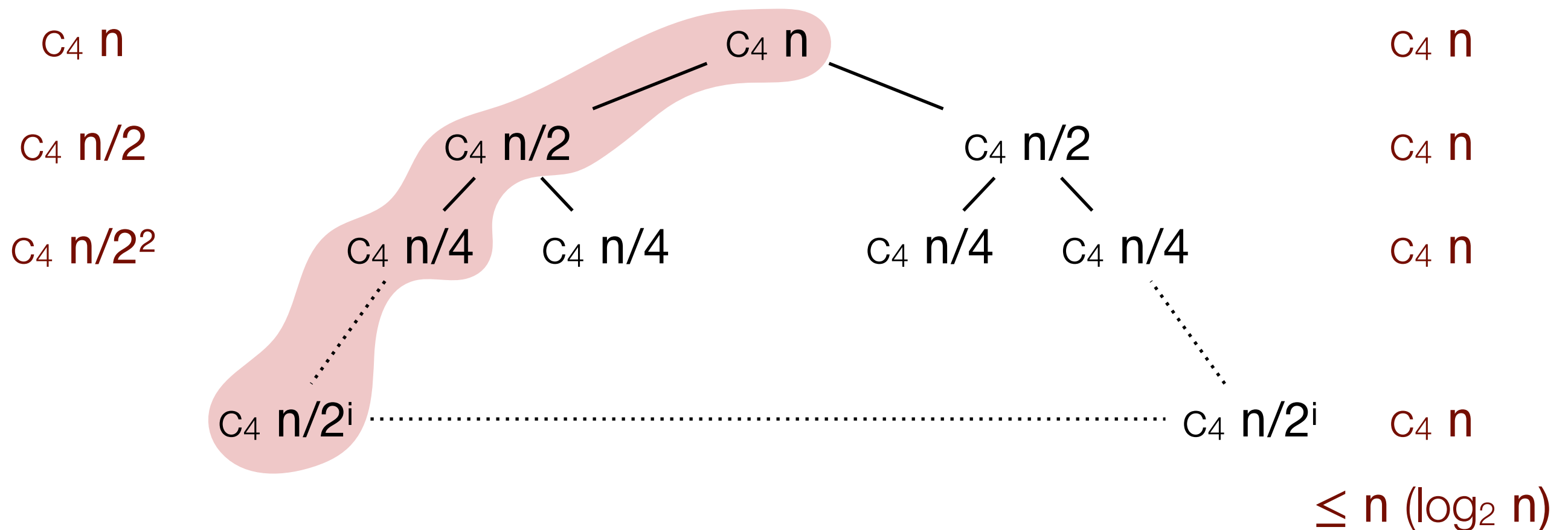
Consequently: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n \log n)$

Span for mergesort for lists

span:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work:



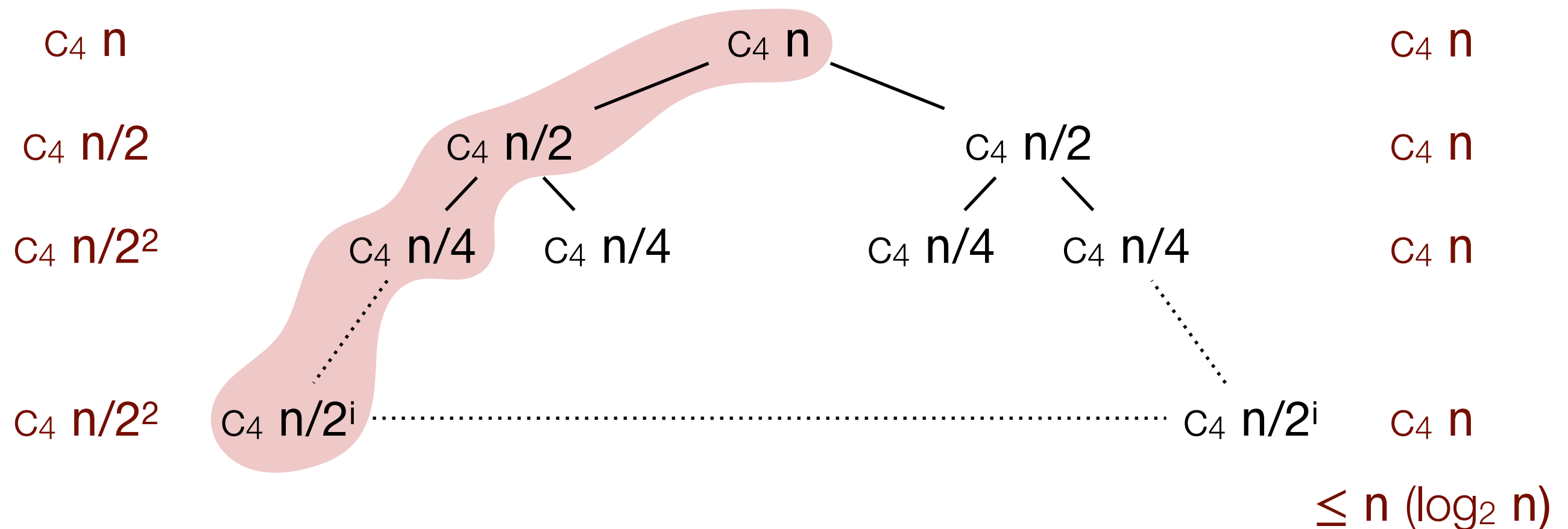
Consequently: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n \log n)$

Span for mergesort for lists

span:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work:



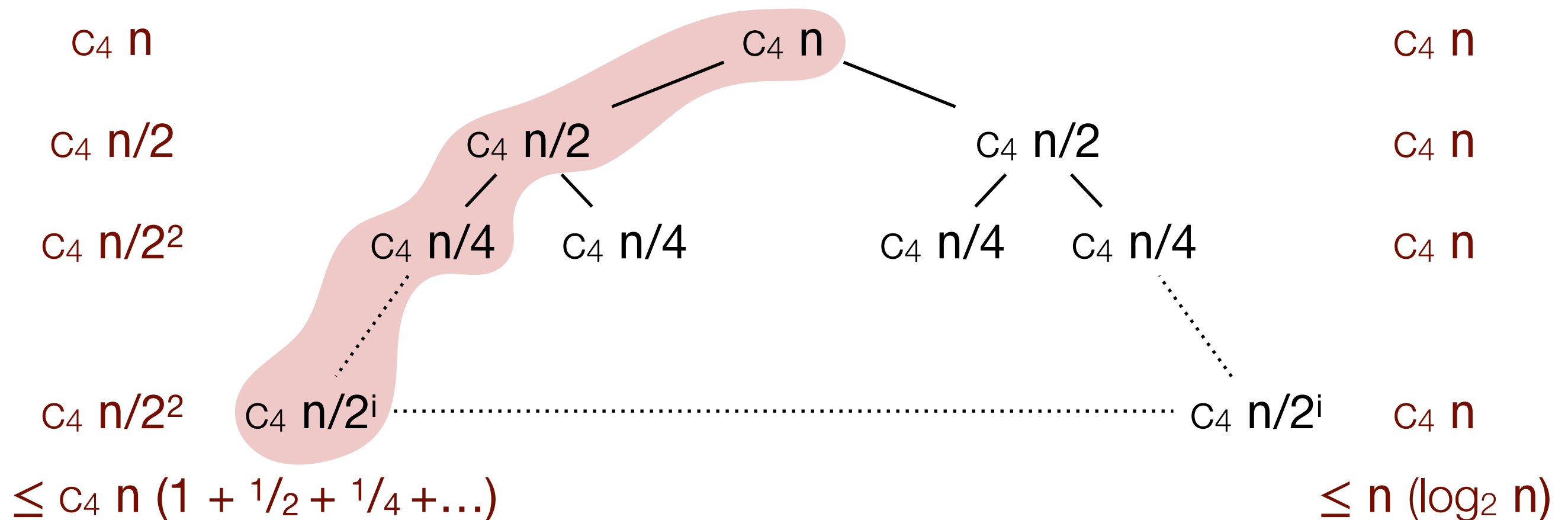
Consequently: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n \log n)$

Span for mergesort for lists

span:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work:



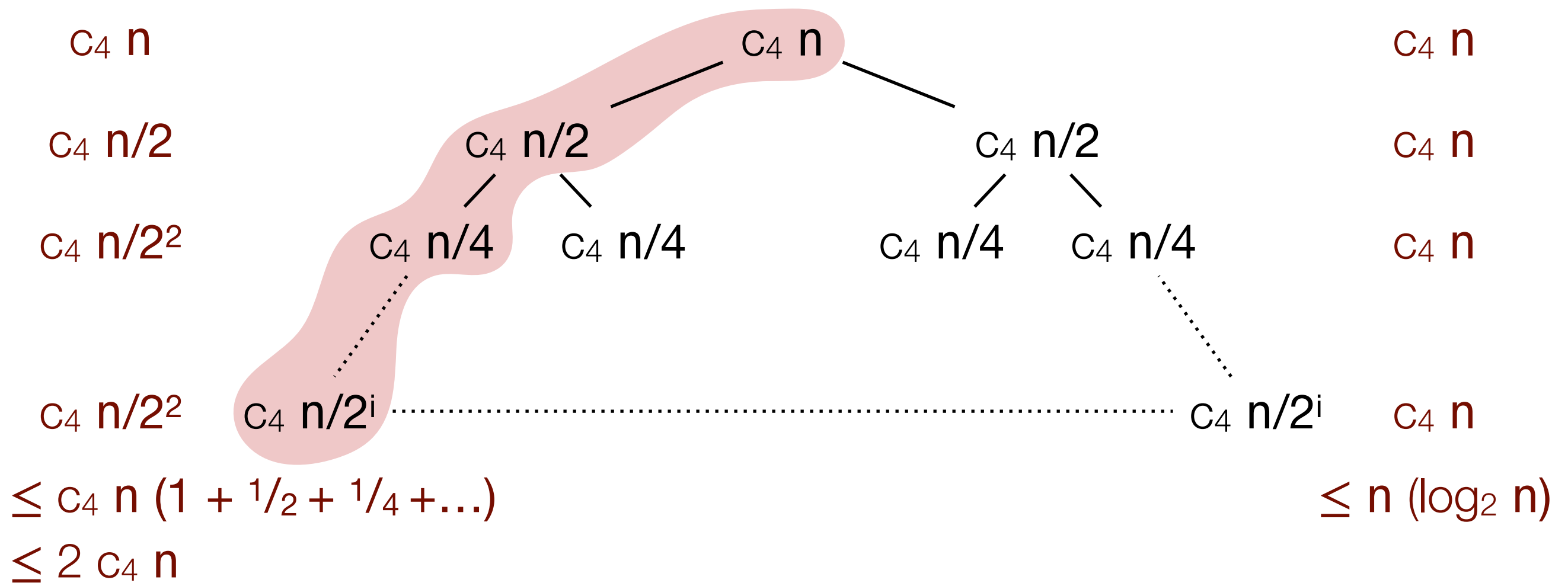
Consequently: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n \log n)$

Span for mergesort for lists

span:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work:



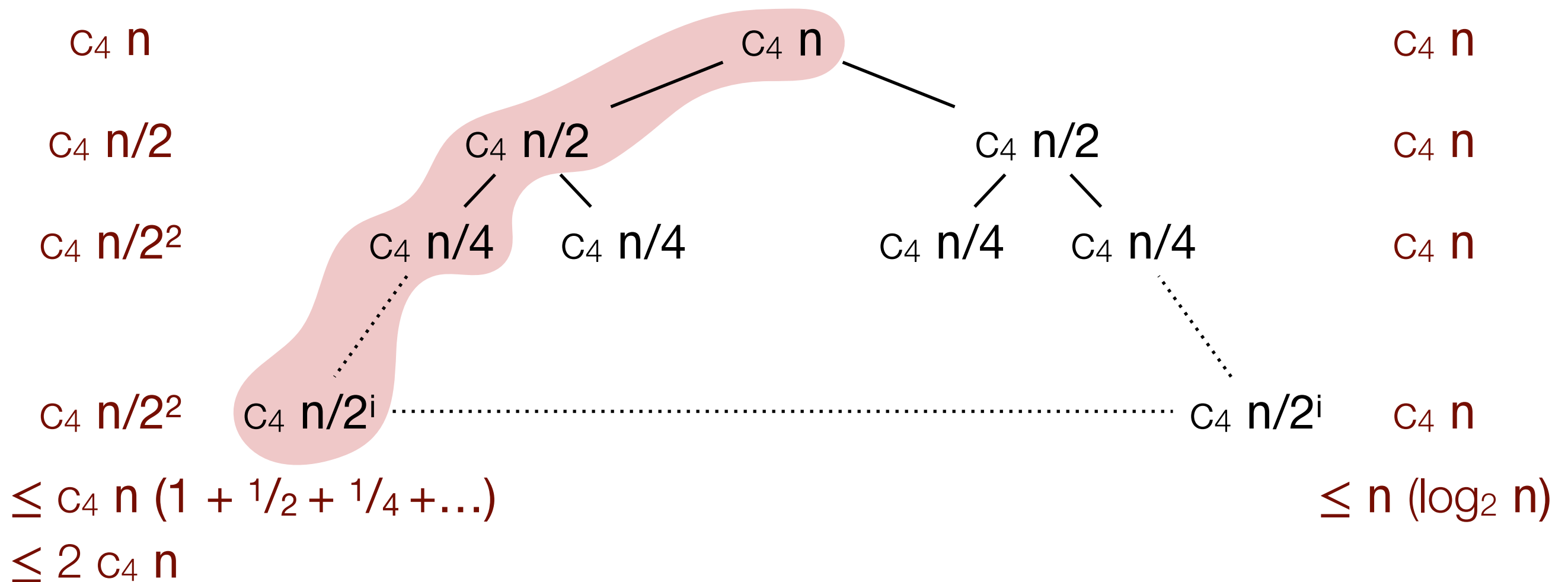
Consequently: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n \log n)$

Span for mergesort for lists

span:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work:



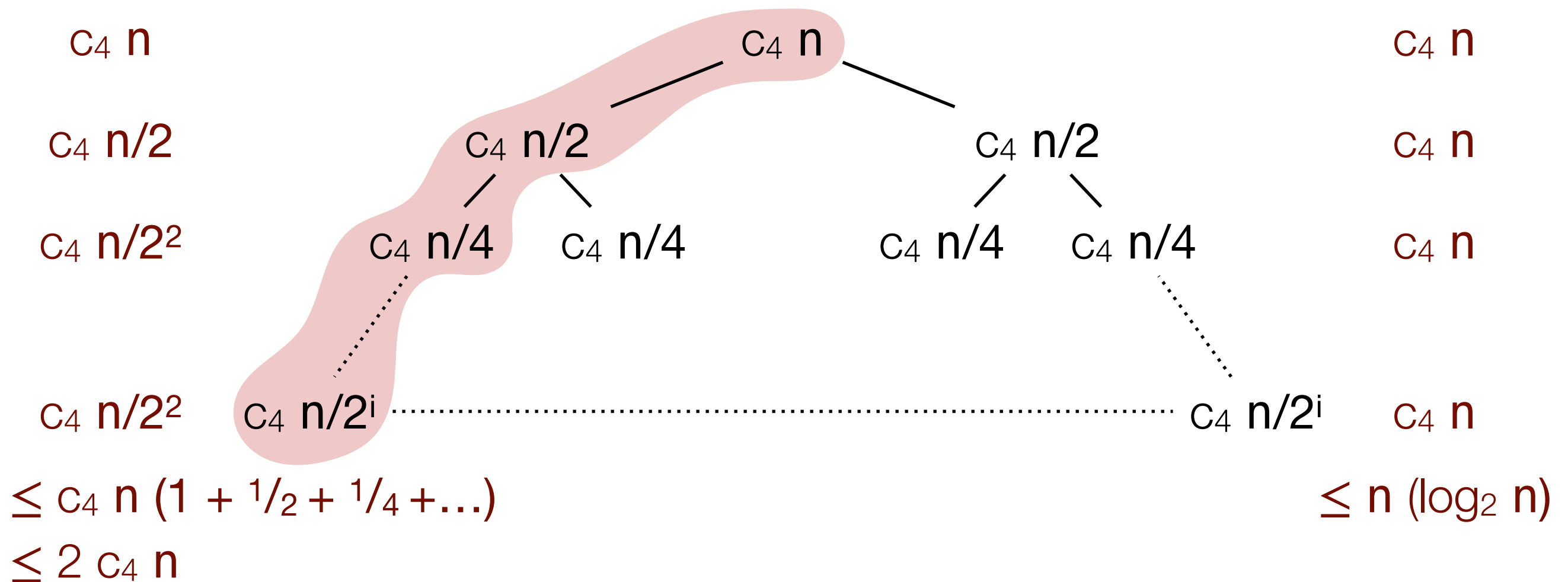
Consequently: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n \log n)$ and $S_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n)$.

Span for mergesort for lists

span:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work:



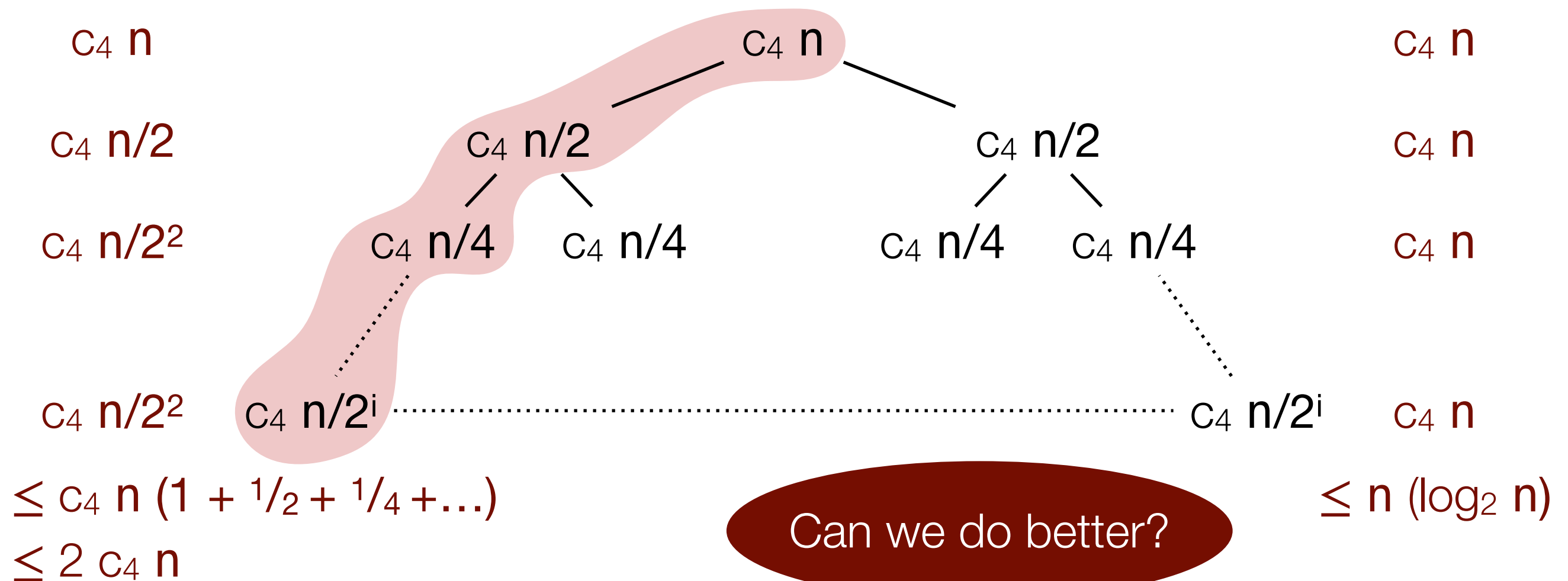
Consequently: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n \log n)$ and $S_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n)$.

Span for mergesort for lists

span:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work:



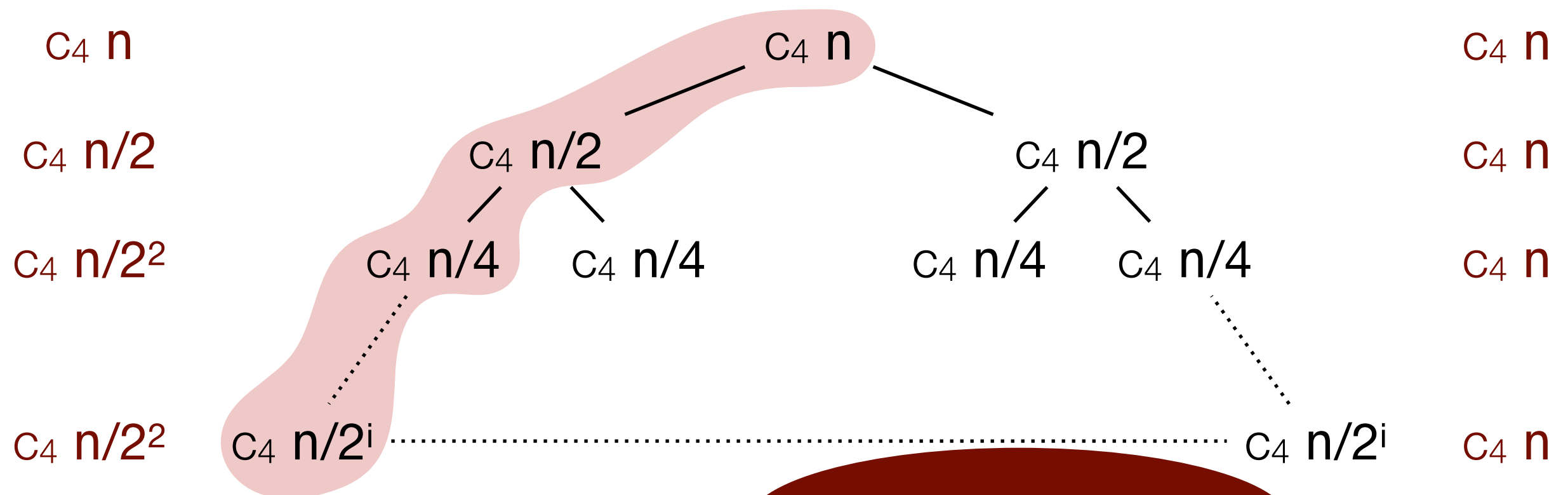
Consequently: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n \log n)$ and $S_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n)$.

Span for mergesort for lists

span:

$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work:

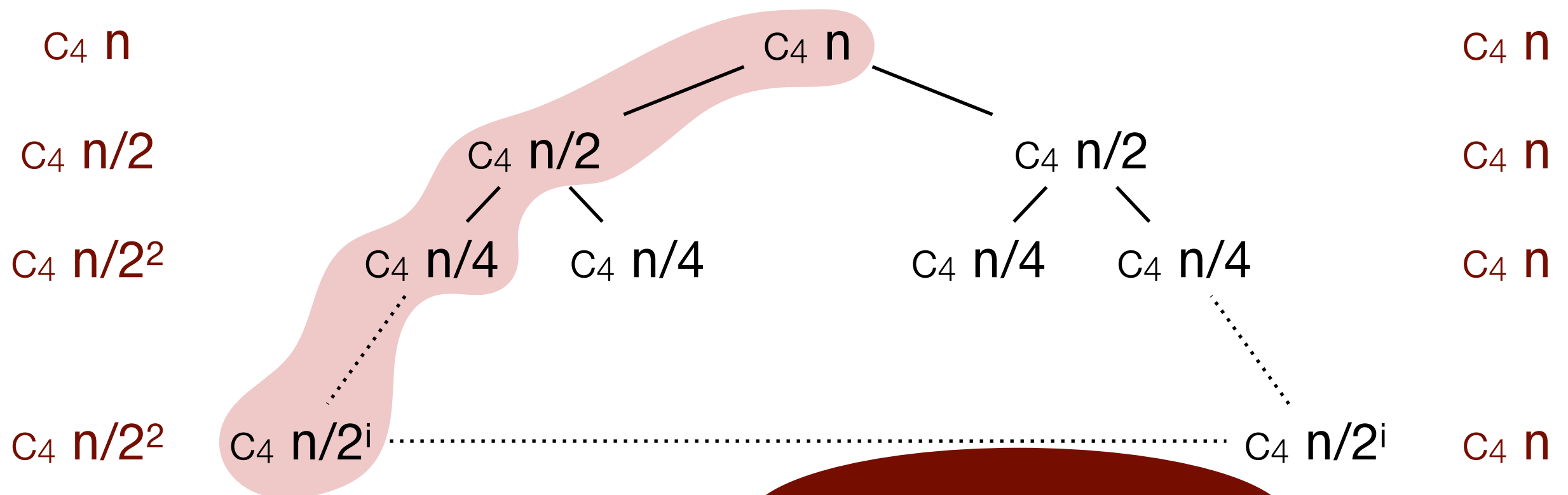


Span for mergesort for lists

span:

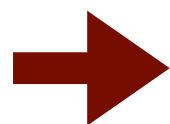
$$W_{\text{msort}}(n) \leq c_4 n + W_{\text{msort}}(n/2)$$

work:



Can we do better?

Consequently: $W_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n \log n)$ and $S_{\text{msort}}(n)$ is $O(n)$.



What if we were given a tree, rather than a list?

That's all for today. Have a good weekend!