You probably squared both sides and tried to solve the resulting quadratic equation by factoring. However, the solutions to $0 = (a - 1)(a - 8)$ are not -1 and -8. Remember that this equation becomes two linear equations: $a - 1 = 0$ and $a - 8 = 0$. Solve these and then check your results back in the original equation. If a solution does not make the equation true, it is an extraneous solution. The correct answer is $a = 8$.